

# CHILDREN OF AFRICA



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JAMES B. BAIRD

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CHILDREN OF AFRICA







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BOYS HUNTING

# CHILDREN OF AFRICA

BY

✓  
JAMES B. BAIRD

AUTHOR OF

"NYONO AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME"



WITH EIGHT COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS



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*In preparing his coloured pictures, the artist has received much help from photographs kindly supplied by Mr J. W. Skinner and Mr A. J. Story.*

# CHILDREN OF AFRICA

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

“ From Greenland’s icy mountains,  
From India’s coral strand,  
Where Afric’s sunny fountains  
Roll down their golden sand,  
From many an ancient river,  
From many a palmy plain,  
They call us to deliver  
Their land from error’s chain.”

THERE is not one of you, my dear boys and girls, who does not know this oft-sung missionary hymn. But if there is, then of this I am sure, there is not one who knows it who does not love it, for it is one of the most beautiful of all our hymns. Since it was written many years ago by Bishop Heber, hundreds and hundreds of young voices have sung it; hundreds and hundreds are singing it to-day; and hundreds and hundreds will yet sing it.

It is a great call to us who know Christ our Saviour to spread abroad into all heathen lands our knowledge of Him who came down from heaven and died to save mankind. And nobly has the call been responded to. The Christian Churches have sent forth messengers into all the ends of the earth to preach the “glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people” in obedience to the command of their

risen Lord who said, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations."

So in our own day we find that Christ's ambassadors have gone into every continent and penetrated into the most distant lands; that the Bible, or some part of it at least, has been translated into many different languages; and that the lives of countless numbers of native peoples have been made purer and holier and happier by their knowledge of Him who loves them.

As you all know one of the continents of the earth is called Africa—the dark Continent; and it is about Africa and its children I want to write to you.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DARK CONTINENT

AFRICA has been called the Dark Continent, and the name is suitable in more ways than one. To the European people it was for ages a dark continent, because it was unknown, that is, unexplored by them. The name is also appropriate because Africa is the home of millions of dark-skinned people. But from a Christian point of view Africa is the dark continent, because over most of its inhabitants there still hangs a black cloud of heathen darkness that shuts out the glorious rays of the Gospel of Light and Love.

Of course you must know that Africa has not all been an unknown land. The northern part of it, which borders the Mediterranean Sea, has been known from ancient times. And is not Egypt the land of the Nile and the home of the Pharaohs in Africa,



although we sometimes do not realise it? But it is not so much of these northern lands that I want to tell you as about the far greater portion that stretches away south over the Equator right down to the Cape. This part was until not so long ago the dark unknown continent, the land of those teeming millions of dark-skinned people who lived out their lives without ever hearing the Gospel story and without knowing the love of God for the children of men.

For hundreds of years very, very little was known of this vast land lying away to the south. The ancient peoples must have been afraid to explore it, and it is no wonder, for Africa is a land full of dangers and difficulties that must have appeared overwhelming to the ancients. Here is a description of part of a voyage along the African Coast made in the old days. I read it the other day in a nice book about Central Africa. "Having taken in water we sailed thence straight forwards until we came to a great gulf which the interpreter said was called the Horn of the West. In it was a large island, and in the island a lake like a sea, and in this another island on which we landed; and by day we saw nothing but woods, but by night we saw many fires burning, and heard the sounds of flutes and cymbals, and the beating of drums, and an immense shouting. Fear came upon us, and the soothsayers bade us quit the island. Having speedily set sail, we passed by a burning country full of incense, and from it huge streams of fire flowed into the sea; and the land could not be walked upon because of the heat. Being alarmed we speedily sailed away thence also, and going along four days we saw by night the land full of flame, and in the midst was a lofty fire, greater than the rest,

and seeming to touch the stars. This by day appeared as a vast mountain called the Chariot of the Gods. On the third day from this, sailing by fiery streams, we came to a gulf called the Horn of the South."

After reading such a description do you wonder that the ancients left the land to the south severely alone? We to-day can give a very simple explanation for the above fiery exhibition. These ancient mariners had evidently visited that part of Africa at the time of the bush fires and were consequently appalled.

In the year 1486 a Portuguese navigator, called Diaz, sighted the Cape of Good Hope; and a fellow countryman, Vasco da Gama, a few years later, discovered Natal and the Cape route to India. But of inland exploration there was little or none till men like James Bruce and Mungo Park made their famous journeys in the interior, the one on the Blue Nile, and the other on the Niger. Then bit by bit our knowledge of the interior of Africa was added to by such brave men of whom Dr Livingstone is the most famous.

If you ever get the opportunity of looking at an old map of Africa you will find that most of the interior is blank. But now the map of Africa is filled with names and features that are known to us through exploration. Mighty rivers and great lakes have been discovered, and mountains of which the ancients only dreamed are familiar to us. All honour to the brave men who have laid us so heavily under their debt, and to no one more than to David Livingstone, whose noble example was as an inspiration, and who as missionary and explorer laid down his life for the Dark Continent.

But for many years the European nations only looked upon Africa as a land whence slaves were to

be taken for their plantations in the New World. And this part of the history of Africa is a dark blot upon their fair fame. What with the European slave-buying in the West, the Arab slave-hunting in the East, and the chiefs perpetually at war and enslaving one another's people, the lives of countless numbers of these ignorant people were made miserable in the extreme.

The village lies slumbering peacefully in the hollow in the midst of its gardens of maize and sweet potatoes. It is silently surrounded before dawn by the cruel Arab and his men. Shots ring out. The startled inhabitants rush forth into the grey morning with shouts of "Nkondo!" (War!") "Nkondo!" (War!") The men who resist or try to flee are ruthlessly shot down. Houses and gardens are burned and destroyed, the dead and dying are left where they fall, round the necks of the living is riveted the hateful slave stick, and the gang is on its way to the coast leaving behind only the abomination of desolation. Too often, alas! have the children of Africa tasted of this bitter cup.

And now that the European people know the sin from which they were freed by the mercy of God, it behoves them to try their best to make up to the black people for the injury they formerly did them. That much is being done we know for the whole continent is marked out as belonging to the different European nations and is ruled by them. So the days of the old tribal wars are over and the slave-hunter has disappeared from the land.

The future of the Dark Continent you will then see lies now to a large extent in the hands of the people of Europe. The old rule of the native chiefs has in

most places passed away, and in others is rapidly passing. The power has gone into the hands of the white man. Pray God he may use it wisely and guide his black brother towards the green pastures as becomes a follower of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER III

### THE GREAT RACES OF AFRICA

BEFORE I begin to speak to you about the children of Africa, I would like you to understand how the people of Africa are separated into different families or divisions. There are in Africa nearly two hundred millions of people, but they do not all belong to the same race. The three big families are the Berbers in the north, the Negroes in the middle, and the Bantus in the south. Besides these there are some smaller divisions to which belong the Pigmies or Dwarfs, those strange little people whom Stanley encountered on his famous journey through the terrible forests of the Congo. Then there are the Hottentots and the Bushmen of the south-west corner of Africa, who have been driven into the desert and hilly places by the more powerful invading Bantu tribes.

Many long years ago the whole of the northern part of Africa was invaded by large numbers of fierce Arab tribes. They were very warlike and soon overran the whole country and settled down in it, and lived side by side with the original people of the country as their masters, but with whom they afterwards mingled. So the North Africans of to-day are, you see, a people of mixed race.

These hordes of conquering Arabs who overran the country were Mohammedans, and they forced their religion upon the people among whom they settled. Mohammedanism is therefore the chief religion of the north of Africa. Now these Berber tribes are very dark-skinned when compared with Europeans, but they do not belong to the black people. They are, in fact, classed along with the white races.

The true black people are the Negroes, and their home is in the middle part of Africa which stretches eastwards right across from the West Coast. They are the people with the black skins, the woolly heads, the thick lips, the flat noses, and the beautiful white teeth. It is they whose forefathers were bought as slaves and taken to America where we find their descendants to-day. They were a heathen people, and had many cruel customs, and some of them were cannibals. Mohammedanism has come upon them from the north and the east, and a great many of them now belong to that religion.

The home of the Bantu people is the great southern portion of Africa. The Bantus are not so black as are the Negroes, nor are they quite so thick-lipped and flat-nosed. But in all other ways they are very similar to their Negro neighbours. They are a heathen people although Christianity has made good progress among them. They are brave and intelligent, and are showing themselves able to adopt a higher and better way of living.

The other smaller tribes, the Pigmyes, the Hottentots, and the Bushmen are far below the Negroes and Bantus in intelligence. The first of these, the Pigmyes or Dwarfs, inhabit the dense forest region of the Congo, and not very much is known about them even to-day.



The Hottentots and the Bushmen live away down in the extreme south-west of Africa and the Kalahari Desert. It is said that they are the descendants of the older inhabitants of Africa, who had to seek refuge in the hills and deserts from the powerful Bantu tribes who invaded and seized their country.

Now I think this will be quite enough information about the different races dwelling in Africa. What I want you to understand is that the whole of the northern portion of Africa is Mohammedan, that the Negro people are many already Mohammedan, and that others are rapidly being converted to that religion, and that the Bantu people are mostly yet heathen, while some have become Christian, especially those of the south.

In Africa there is a great war going on. Three mighty forces or powers are fighting against one another, and victory cannot go to them all. These great forces are Mohammedanism, heathenism, and Christianity. But to those of us who know the African, it is plain that the great fight will be between the first and the last, that the Africans will be ruled by the Cross or the Crescent, that the Bible or the Koran will be their Holy Book, that Mohammed or Christ will be their guide in this life.

Already we see that the whole of the north follows the Prophet of Mecca. The nature-worship of the Negro and Bantu, although yet strong, will pass away with the passing years. The south is largely Christian, and Christianity is pushing up northwards. Christian missions are attacking the strongholds of Mohammedanism and heathenism in the north, west, and east, in Egypt and the newly opened Soudan.

## CHAPTER IV

## AN AFRICAN HOUSE

YOU must be wondering when you are going to hear about the children of Africa, for I am sure you want to know about them now, the little sons and daughters of the big black people I have so far written about.

Well, it so happens that I am sitting writing this story in a native hut in Africa, many thousands of miles away from you ; and if any of you wanted to come and join me here and see for yourselves, you would have to travel a good many weeks to reach me. Will you let me first try to describe this house I am in, and the village of which it is part, as being what most African huts and villages are like, and in which black boys and girls are born and play.

This hut is a square one, and a good deal larger than you would imagine. It is the size of a small cottage at home. Long ago most of the huts were round, I believe, and indeed many of them are so yet. But square ones have come into fashion here, for even in far-off Africa there is such a thing as fashion, and it can change too. This hut is divided into three rooms. The middle one is provided with a door to the front and another to the back. The rooms on each side have very small windows like spy holes looking out to each end. All round the house runs a verandah which prevents the fierce rays of the sun from beating against the walls of the house and throws off the heavy showers of rain of the wet season clear of the house. The whole house is built of grass and bamboos,

and is smeared over with mud inside and out. The roof, supported by stout cross beams in the middle of the partition walls in which other forked beams stand, slopes not very steeply down to the verandah posts which hold up its lower edges. It is heavily thatched with fine long grass. The owner knows by experience what a tropical thunder-shower means, so he leaves nothing to chance in thatching his house.

In the middle of the floor in the room with the doors a small hole has been scooped. It is surrounded with stones and forms the cooking hearth, although there is also attached to this house a very small grass shed about a dozen yards away at the back of the house, which is used as a kitchen on most occasions. The doors are made of grass and bamboos, and at night are put in place and held firm by a wooden cross bar. Such is the house of a well-off native of Africa. It takes but a few weeks to build and lasts but a few years.

Of course in a house with such small windows it is always more or less dark. In the end rooms with the spy holes it is always dark to me. But black boys and girls do not seem to mind this. In fact I believe they are like owls and cats, and can see in the dark. I am certain though of this that they can see ever so much better than white children can.

There is not much to look at in the way of furniture in a black man's house. Here is a table made in imitation of a European one and some chairs too, whose backs look forbiddingly straight, a few cooking pots, some sleeping mats, a hoe or two, some baskets, and some odds and ends complete the list. What





A VILLAGE HUT



surprises a white man is the number of things the black people can do without. For instance, if a white man wants to travel in this country, he must first of all gather together a crowd of natives to carry him and his belongings. He must have a tent and a bed, pots and pans, boxes of provisions, a cook, and servants, before he can travel in comfort. But if a black man goes on a journey he simply takes a pot and some food with him, and maybe a mat and blanket, takes his stick in his hand and his bundle on his shoulder and off he goes, it may be to walk hundreds of miles before he comes to his destination.

To-day there is no fire in the hearth. There is no chimney in this house so I could not have a fire and enjoy my stay. The owner, however, would not mind the smoke from the firewood. He is used to crouching over a fire and his eyes get hardened. I see in one corner there is a heap of grain called millet, and in another a white ant-heap. It has risen in the night for I did not notice it before, and I am glad that none of my belongings were in that corner of the room. Nothing but iron seems amiss to the white ant. His appetite is terrible and he can play sad havoc with one's property in a single night. There is grain in one corner I have said, and consequently there are rats.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin of whom you have all heard would find plenty of rats to charm in any African village. Then in the houses there are many kinds of biting insects, and some that don't bite, but look ugly. The mosquito is calling ping! ping! everywhere, and night is made endurable only by retiring under a mosquito net. The mosquito is the most dangerous insect in Africa, for it has been

found out by clever doctors that it is the mosquito bite that causes the dreaded malaria fever.

In tropical Africa nearly all the insects bite or sting, even innocent-looking caterpillars, if touched, give one itch. Nor may you pull every flower you see, for some of them are more stinging than nettles. To-day I came across two boys hoeing a road. One was a bright fellow who kept things lively by singing snatches of songs and whistling at his work. When I came near I spied a fine large glossy black beetle hurrying away after having been thrown up by the hoe. I asked the lively youth what kind of insect it was. In reply he dropped his hoe and pounced upon the unfortunate beetle and held it up to me for inspection. "Does it bite?" I asked, astonished. "Oh! yes," he said, "look." So saying he stuck the point of one of his fingers close to the head of the angry creature, which promptly seized it with its pincers.

But one gets used to these pests, and even the sight of a spider the size of a two-shilling piece running up the wall does not disturb one. There is one insect, however, you may not despise, and which you can never get accustomed to, the red ant. He comes in millions, and if he deigns to pay your house a visit while on his journey, you had better leave him in possession of the place. Unless you happen to head him off early with burning grass and red hot ashes you need not stay to argue with him. Everything living disappears before him, rats, mice, lizards, cats, dogs, boys and girls, men and women give way before his majesty, the red ant.

I remember watching for half an hour an army of red ants on the march. They were streaming out

from a small hole in the grass, crossing over a hoed road, and disappearing into another hole in the grass on the other side. Each was carrying a tiny load that looked like a small grain of rice, and was hurrying after his neighbour as if the whole world depended on his speed. Here and there on each side of the hurrying companies were scouts and officers without loads evidently engaged in keeping the others in order and in watching for enemies. What I thought were grains of rice, the boys told me were "ana a chiswe," that is white ant's children. Somewhere underground there must have been dreadful war and the red ants were carrying off the spoils of victory.

Next there came along a poor little lizard borne by eager and willing—I had almost said hands—pincers. Here a pair were fixed in, there another pair. Everywhere that a pair of pincers could find a grip there was the pair. I pulled the lizard out but it was quite dead. So I pushed it back into the excited line and it was soon on the march again. After a little there came past a curious round little object into which dozens of ants were sticking and which with ants swarming atop was being carried along with the stream. I rescued this strange thing too, because I was anxious to find out what it was—the thing inside this living ball of ants. One of the boys got a basin of water and plumped the ball into it, and with a piece of wood scraped the angry insects and frothy-looking stuff off. Then there was revealed a tiny toad which the boys called "Nantuzi." It was just like a little bag with four legs, one at each corner. When annoyed it swells itself up like a ball and refuses to budge. When seized by the ants it had promptly covered itself with a frothy, sticky spittle,

and so was little hurt. Had I not rescued it, however, it would have been eaten at last overcome by numbers. Then I got tired watching, and left the never-ending ant army still on the march.

## CHAPTER V

### THE AFRICAN CHILD

INSIDE such a house as has been described, and in many a smaller one, are born the children of Africa. At first and for a few days they are not black. I am told they are pink in colour and quite light, but that they soon darken. The mothers and grandmothers are very pleased to welcome new babies and bath and oil them carefully. Nearly all the women one meets about a village have children tied on their backs, or are followed by them toddling behind. These mites glisten in the sun as they are well oiled to keep their skins in good condition.

In some tribes very little children have no names. You ask the mother of an infant what she calls her baby, and she replies, "Alibe dzina"—It has no name. I once asked the father of a plump little infant what the name of his child was. He told me that it had not been named yet but that when the child would begin to smile and recognise people it would get a name. "Well," I said, "when he smiles call him Tommy." Months after I saw the child again, a fine boy he was too, and Tommy was his name. But alas! Tommy did not live more than two years. He took some child trouble and died.

Sometimes the father or the mother may give a child





HIS FIRST SUIT





its name, or sometimes a friend may name it. Many of the names have no special meaning, but some of them refer to things that happened or were seen at the time the child was born. Boys' and girls' names differ from one another although the difference is not clear to the white man. But if he stays long enough among the black children he will begin to know what are boys' names and what are girls'. I know a bright boy who is called "Mang'anda." In English you would have to call him Master Playful. Another child I can recall is called "Handifuna," which means "Miss they don't want me." But wherever the white man is settling in Africa the people are picking up European names; and it is a pity, I think, that the old names will pass away.

Little black children are not nursed and tended so carefully as white children are. From a very early age they are tied on to their mother's backs and are taken everywhere. It is seldom that an accident happens through a child falling out, for the black children seem to have an extraordinary power of holding on. If mother is too busy another back is soon found for baby to show his sticking-on ability. In any village you may see a group of women pounding corn in their mortars under a shady tree. It is hard work, this daily pounding of corn. Up and down go the heavy wooden pestles. Backwards and forwards go the heads of the babies tied on the mothers' backs. At each downward thud baby's neck gets a violent jerk, but he is all unconscious of it, and sleeps through an ordeal that would kill his white brother. Again a woman with an infant on her back may go a journey of many miles exposed to the full blaze of the African sun. Yet baby is quite comfortable

and never gives a single cry unless when he is hungry.

Then black children have no cribs and cradles as have white ones. When mother is tired of baby, and there is no other back at hand, she simply lays him down on a mat and leaves him to himself to do as he likes. If he makes a noise, well he can just make it. He will disturb nobody, and is allowed to cry until he is tired. Unless he is known to be ill, his squalling, be it never so loud, will attract no attention. Most of the mothers are very proud of their children, and oil them and shave their woolly heads with great care. But in spite of all this care on the mother's part, great numbers of the babies die. Very often they are really killed through their mother's ignorance of how they ought to be fed and nursed when sick. Then diseases like smallpox pass through the villages at intervals and carry off hundreds of children.

A black infant is not clothed like a white one. If his mother is very proud of him he will have a string of beads round his neck or waist. Round his fat little wrist or neck you will often see tied on by string a small medicine charm, put there by his fond mother to protect him against disease or evil influence. When the babies are big enough to toddle they begin to look out for themselves, and when they have fairly found their legs they go everywhere and do almost anything they like so long as they do not give trouble.

A little boy's first article of clothing may be made of different coloured beads carefully woven into a square patch, which he wears hanging down before him from a string of beads encircling his waist. Or it may perhaps be only the skin of a small animal worn

in the same way as the square of beads. He may, however, begin with a cloth from the beginning. If so his mother provides him with a yard of calico, rolls it round him, and sends him out into the world as proud as a white boy with his first pair of trousers.

He gets no special food because he is a child. He eats whatever is going and whatever he can lay his hands upon. Thus he grows up not unlike a little animal. There is not much trouble taken with him. If he lives, he lives ; and if he dies—well, he is buried. No fond lips have bent over him and kissed him asleep, for kissing is not known to his people. Nor has he learned to lisp the name of Jesus at his mother's knee. It is not that his mother does not love him, for she does in her own peculiar way. But all are shrouded in ignorance, father, mother and children, all held in the grip of dark superstitions from which nothing but the light of the Gospel of Love can free them.

## CHAPTER VI

### AN AFRICAN VILLAGE

SHALL we go round the village now ? Well come away and we'll have a walk through it. But as we are strangers and white, I must warn you that many pairs of curious eyes will be watching us when we know not, and all we do and say will be the talk of the village for a long time to come. It is not every day that the villagers get such a good look at a white person, and they will take advantage of their chance to-day. Babies on backs will cry if we come near

them, and little mites that can run will disappear behind their mothers and peep out at us, feeling safe but very much afraid. In fact, many of the women frighten their naughty children by telling them that if they do not behave better they will send them to the white people, who will eat them. Consequently when a white man comes along the children often scatter in terror as from a wild beast. And would not white children do just the same from a black man if they were told that he might eat them.

In a certain African Mission not long after school had been started for the first time, it was found necessary to build a kiln for the burning of bricks. But the eyes of the children had been watching the building, and whatever could it be but a large oven in which to cook them. So the whole school fled pell-mell to their homes. Of course you must remember that in several different parts of Africa some of the tribes were cannibals, and even in our day there are still tribes among which the eating of human flesh is not unknown.

Here we come to a house not unlike the one we have already described to you, but smaller and not so neatly finished. The owner will not be so well-off as the owner of that we occupied. Let us go near along this path. Here comes an old lady to receive us, and there go the children round the corner, and off goes baby yonder into tears, and even the dogs begin to bark. Banana trees grow all round the house, and yonder is a small grove of them on the other side of the courtyard. They are waving a welcome to us with their large ragged leaves. The fruit is hanging in bunches here and there on the old trees, and is evidently not yet ripe.

But before we are introduced to the old lady, who is coming to meet us, let us take a hasty glance round about. First we see that the children are getting braver, and are beginning to show themselves now. Ragged looking little things they are, who do not look overclean. The skin of their bodies is too white to have been washed recently. Isn't it strange that a black boy when he is dirty looks white; just the opposite from a white boy, who, when he is dirty, looks black. The mother of the crying child has turned round so as to shut us off from baby's frightened gaze. In one corner of the courtyard is a pot on a fire, the contents of which are boiling briskly. This we are informed is to be part of the evening meal which is in preparation. It seems to us but a mass of green vegetable. Really it consists of juicy green leaves of a certain kind plucked in the bush. Over there in the shade of the bananas stand one or two mortars in which the women pound their grain, and without which no village, however small, is complete. On the verandah of the house stands the mill—a very primitive one. A large flat stone slightly hollowed out holds the grain which is ground down by another stone, a round one, being rubbed backwards and forwards over the hollow one. Snuff too is ground from tobacco in this way, for many of the men enjoy a pinch of snuff and not a few of the women like to smoke a pipe. A fierce-looking little cat is blinking up at us, watching us narrowly through the dark slits in its large yellow-green eyes, seeming in doubt whether to run off or to put up its back at us. A sleeping mat, made of split reeds, and spread out on the ground near the mortars, is covered with maize ready to be pounded. Two or three baskets are



lying about, some shallow, some deep, some large, and some small. That stump of a tree there serves as a seat when the shade of the bananas is thrown on it. And down on the whole is pouring a flood of tropical sunshine, so hot that we are glad to retire into the shade of a friendly tree.

But the old lady is come and offers us her left hand. Her arms from the wrist almost to the elbow are covered with heavy bracelets, and her legs, from the ankles half way to her knees, are laden with great heavy anklets of the same metal. Clank ! clank ! clank ! like a chained prisoner goes the poor old soul when she walks. Long ago she would carry these huge ornaments with no difficulty, and not a little joy. But now, although proud of them still, no doubt, they must be a trouble to her slipping up and down on her withered arms and legs, for she has tried to protect her old ankles by wrapping round them a rag of calico to keep the brass from hurting. She is dressed in a single calico, none too new, but, we are pleased to see, very clean. Other calicoes doubtless she will possess, carefully stored away and hidden in a basket in the darkest corner of her house.

Her old face is a mass of wrinkles and she has lost nearly all her teeth. But her upper lip ! What a sight ! Poor old creature, what a huge ring there is in it. Why, we can see right into her mouth when she speaks, and to us it is not a pleasant sight. This ring, seen in many old women, is called here a "pelele." Men do not wear it. When a girl is young her upper lip is bored in the middle and a small piece of bone is put into the hole to keep it open. Gradually larger and larger pieces are put in until the full sized "pelele" is reached. Some-

times these rings are as much as two inches in size, and the upper lip is fearfully stretched by wearing them. It hangs away down over the lower lip, and the tongue and inside of the mouth are seen when the old "pelele" wearer speaks.

The old dame is very polite but you can see that she is afraid of us and will be quite glad when we go elsewhere. She says her cat is not a bit fierce but is a first-rate ratter, so much so that there isn't a single rat in her house.

Now to the next house through the bananas. It is like the last and very much the same kind of things are lying about. But instead of a cat we are met by the usual African yellow-haired dog. He, too, is suspicious of us, but retires growling. A hen is busy scraping among the rubbish at the side of the house to provide food for her numerous offspring that chirping follow her motherly cluck ! cluck !

Between this house and the last stand the grain stores, round giant basket-like things with thatched roofs. The largest ones are for holding the maize, and the small ones for storing away the beans. That low building there built of very strong poles is the goat house. It needs to be strong as the hyæna and leopard, and even the lion sometimes pay the village a visit at night. And woe betide the poor goats if a fierce leopard should get in among them. Not satisfied with killing and eating one he will tear open as many as he can, simply for the pure love of killing.

The houses in the village are all much the same as that you have already read about and number about twenty. They are built here, there, and everywhere with no regard to plan or regularity. The corner

of the verandah of this one projects out over the footpath, and we have actually to cross the verandah to get down to the well. The owner only laughs when we ask him why he built his house so near to, and partly upon the path. Some day he says he will hoe a new path to go round about his house. That is African all over. He will do things some day. He thinks the European mad to be such a slave to time.

The owner of each house greets us with a smile, and we are well received by all except some of the old people who are really afraid of white people, and who, while glad to see them when they come to visit their village, are still more glad when they go away. We have gathered quite a crowd of little people about us, and they follow us round very respectfully, watching all we do, and looking at all we have on. Many of them you see suffer from ulcers.

Here and there are patches of tobacco and sweet potatoes, but most of the gardens are outside the village proper. Their chief crops are maize, millet, sweet potatoes and cassava root. Paths twist about and cross one another in a marvellous manner. This one leads down to the stream, that to the next village ; this to the graveyard in yonder thicket, a place shunned by the children, that to the hill. A white stranger promptly gets lost in African paths and has to give himself up to the guidance of the native. The whole country is a vast net-work of such snake-like paths, and I verily believe you could pass from one coast to the other along them.

But just as we get to the far end of the village there is something to interest us. It is a very small house well fenced in. On the roof and exposed to





AN AFRICAN VILLAGE



the sun and rain are spread and tied down a blanket and various calicoes. This must be the grave of someone important. It is, and we ask to be allowed to see inside. Permission is given because it would not be polite to refuse it, not because it is given willingly. It proves to be the grave of the headman of the village who died about a year ago. His clothes and blanket, of no further use, have been spread over the roof covering the grave, and on the grave itself are lying his pots and baskets and drinking cups. In a small dish some snuff has been placed.

His house which was only a few yards away had been destroyed with much ceremony after the death of the owner, and the site is now heavily overgrown with castor oil plants and self-sown tomatoes. Not far from where his house had been is the tree at the foot of which he had offered up sacrifices to the spirits of his forefathers. Being the chief of the village he was buried beside his house and not away in the bush where the common people are laid to rest. I asked the children if they were not afraid of this grave in the middle of the village, and they said that during the day they were not afraid because the noises of the village kept the spirits away. All the time we were visiting this sacred place the old woman with the "pelele" was following us at a short distance, not at all too pleased to see us pry into such places, but too afraid to tell us so. She was much relieved when our steps were turned elsewhere.

Such is the home of the African children. Here they are born and grow up and play and laugh and cry to their heart's content. It is a careless, easy life with nothing beyond food and clothing to be interested in, and not a thought for the morrow. But

we are here to give them a new interest in life. In this large courtyard we gather all the people of the village together, and with the western sun shining upon the little crowd we tell them of Jesus and give them something more to talk about than ourselves and our clothes. Here in the quiet of this African village, surrounded by the banana trees, is told once more the story of the love of Jesus. The old woman with the ring in her lip says our words are only white men's tales, and will go on in her own way teaching the children the superstitions of her forefathers.

The seed we sow will not all fall on stony places. Some of it will fall on good ground and bear fruit in the lives of these simple village people.

## CHAPTER VII

### GAMES

WHEN black children are small, the boys and girls play together ; but when they grow up a bit the boys separate themselves from the girls and have their own games. They would never dream now of playing with the girls. The latter are not strong and brave like boys, and must play by themselves. In this respect they are just like white boys who feel ashamed to play with girls.

One of the boy's greatest enjoyments is to go hunting in the woods with their bows and arrows. It is small birds they want, and their keen eyes scan the leafy boughs for victims of any kind. It does not matter how small or pretty a bird may be, down it

comes struck by a heavy-headed arrow. Victim and arrow fall back down at the feet of the cunning shooter. The reason why the boys kill even the smallest bird is that everything, no matter how small, will be eaten. They do not eat meat as white people do. All they want is just enough to make their porridge tasty and to let them have gravy. So any small animal, such as you would despise, is acceptable to them.

Pushing through the bush is difficult work, but the black boys do not seem to mind it although the grass towers far above their heads. All they fear is, that perhaps they may tread upon a snake or disturb a wild beast, but in the excitement of the chase they soon forget all about snakes and wild beasts. Should a boy be very good at imitating the call of birds he gets ready an arrow with many heads—six or seven. This he makes by splitting up one end of a thin bamboo and sharpening each piece. These ends he ties in such a way as to separate them from one another, leaving one in the middle. He then takes his bow and his newly made arrow and goes off to the bush. Having selected a likely spot he quickly pulls the grass together loosely over his head to hide him from above, crouches under it and begins to imitate the call of a certain bird of which kind he sees many about. In a short time the birds come hovering over the grass concealment, and the boy, watching his chance, sends his arrow into their midst. In this way several birds are obtained at a time.

Then the boys hunt small game, such as rabbits, with their dogs. The dogs chase the rabbits out of the long grass, and the boys stand ready to knock them over with their knobbed sticks. Another favourite occupation is to go down to the gardens

with hoes and dig out field-mice which are relished just as much as the birds are.

Traps of various kinds are set to catch game. Some are made with propped-up stones that fall down and crush the unwary victims. Some are made with a running noose that strangles the unfortunate beast. A very simple kind for catching birds is made out of a long bamboo. A spot is first chosen where birds are likely to gather together quickly. The bamboo is then split up the middle for about a third of its length. The ends, which if left to themselves would spring together with a snap, are held wide apart by a cross-pin of wood. To this pin is attached a long string which goes away over to the grass where the youthful trapper lies hidden. A handful of grain is then scattered over the space between the split ends of the bamboo. When everything is prepared the eager youth retires to hide in the grass and watch the birds. It is not long before several are enjoying the bait, and when a sufficient number have entered, the boy pulls the string which displaces the cross-pin and the two ends of the bamboo close together with a snap. The poor birds are not all quick enough to escape, and several lie dead to reward the cunning of the trapper. Such doings you would hardly call games, but so they are considered by the black boy, for whenever I ask them to tell me what games they play at, hunting and trapping are always among those given me.

Of games proper, hand-ball is a great favourite, and is played in the courtyard or any other cleared space. This is a kind of ball-play in which two sides contend against one another for possession of the ball, which is usually just a lump of raw rubber. When



the sides have been chosen, and it matters not how many a side so long as there are plenty, the game is started by a player throwing the ball to another boy on his side. Thus the ball passes through the air from player to player, it being the endeavour of the opposite side to intercept it and of the first lot to retain possession of it. Every time the ball is caught all the players with the exception of him who holds the ball, clap their hands together once and sometimes stamp with their feet.

The players may dodge about as they like and jump as high as they like in their endeavour to catch the ball. It is an excellent game and a hard one, and would be enjoyed, I am sure, by white boys, for no lazy bones need ever think he would get the ball. Only he who is quick of hand and eye would ever get a chance, and the more clever the players, the harder is the game. After the ball has gone round one side a certain number of times the players on that side shout out a little chorus and clap their hands to proclaim their victory. Then the game begins afresh and is carried on with such vigour that when finished each boy is sweating freely and glad to retire to a cool place to rest.

A quiet game in contrast to the hand-ball is the native game of draughts in which the opponents "eat" one another to use the native expression. Four rows of little holes are made in a shady place. The opponents sit on opposite sides and each has command of two rows. Sometimes there are six and at other times eight holes in each row. Each player has a number of seeds or little pieces of stone or other small things, about the size of marbles and he places one in each hole leaving a certain one empty. Then



begin mysterious movements of taking out and putting in. So it seems to the European at first. But there are rules, and the black boys know them well. The idea is to move one's own "men" one hole along at a time, until those in any hole surpass in number those in the enemy's hole opposite when they are taken and placed out of the game. The game is won when one is able to take the last remaining "man" on his opponent's side. To the boys it is a very engrossing game, and they often forget all about time over it. Sometimes the holes are chiselled out on a board and the game played by the grown-up people on the verandah of their houses.

Quite a different game from any of those described is that played by both boys and girls among the cassava bushes in the gardens. When one finds a single leaf growing in a fork of a bush he calls out to his neighbour, "I have bound you." The neighbour considers himself bound till he finds a leaf in a similar position, when he calls out, "I have freed myself." He who first finds the leaf binds the other, and so the game goes on till the children are tired of it. The boys have another use for the cassava leaf. They pluck a nice big one. Then the left hand is closed fist-like, but leaving a hollow in the hand. The leaf is then laid across the hollow, resting on the thumb and the bent forefinger. The open right hand is now brought down whack upon the leaf, which is split in two with a loud report.

Hide-and-seek you all know. I think it must be played by children all over the world. It is played by the black children of Africa and enjoyed very much. There are splendid opportunities for hiding in the long grass. You have only to go into it a few feet,

and you are completely hidden. Sometimes the black children vary the game from the ordinary hide-and-seek. The seeker will be a wild beast—say a lion—and the hiders will be deer. They go off and hide in the grass and the lion has to find his prey. Sometimes the hider will represent a deer and go and conceal himself, and the seekers will be hunters on the chase. Then if there is water near one will hide in the water and pretend to be a crocodile, and when the others come down to the stream to bathe or draw water the crocodile rushes out on them and tries to seize them by the legs.

The boys also play at war with tiny bows and arrows made of grass stalks. They stand in rows facing one another and try to “kill” one another with their arrows.

There is another good game played by the boys called “nsikwa.” It has no English name or I would have written it instead of the native one. There are sides in this game, but two boys can play it. Of course the fun is better when there are perhaps four or five aside. The boys sit in the courtyard in lines facing one another and about ten feet apart. In front of each player is placed a small piece of maize cob about two or three inches high, from which the grain has been taken. It is then very light and easily overturned. In his right hand each player holds a native top. When all are ready, the players send their tops spinning across the clear space with great force and try to knock down the piece of maize cob belonging to the player opposite. To and fro in the battle are whirled the tops to the accompaniment of shouts and laughter of opponents and onlookers.

Most of the games I have seen are boys' games, but the girls of Africa can play too like the girls of other lands. But their play mostly consists of trying to do what they see their mothers do. Thus the girls will seize the pestles and try to pound at the mortars. Others will take the winnowing baskets and try if they can do as well as mother in sifting out the hard grains from the fine flour. They also play at keeping house and marriages. They borrow pots and cooking utensils from their mothers and go to the bush and build little houses and make believe to set up house on their own account. If they play this game in the village the girls mark out the walls of the supposed houses with sand, and say, "Here is my hearth, there is my sleeping place, and this is the doorway." They also make food with mud and invite one another to afternoon mud cakes, and pretending to eat them throw the mud over their shoulders.

When the big people of the village go to work in the gardens the children often go to the bush and build little houses and bring flour and maize and other kinds of food and play at a new village. Then one will be chosen to be a hyena and another will be a cock. The hyena goes off to the grass and hides, and the cock struts about the village. Then someone will call out, "It is night, let us go to sleep." So they all go to sleep, and in a short time the cock will crow, "Kokoliliko," which is the black boys' way of saying "Cock-a-doodle-do." The hyena will also roar.

Those in the house will awake, and one will say, "It is daybreak," but others will say, "It is only that foolish cock crowing in the middle of the night." Then hearing the hyena one will get up, open the

door cautiously, and chase the beast away. When the big people go back to the village the children are not long in following them.

Boys and girls also play at funerals. One will pretend to be dead, and the others will gather round in sorrow and mourn over the dead one and lift him up with great ceremony and bear him off for burial. But if I make this chapter any longer I am afraid I may tire you. Let me finish with just one more pastime. Some of the black children play at making little animals out of mud, just as white boys and girls play at mud-pies. The African women do not bake pies, so the children know nothing of the pleasures of mud-pie making. Instead, they make little mud dogs and hens and lions and snakes. These they put out into the sun where they get baked hard. They can then be carried about and played with.

These games are some of the many played by African children, and I hope you will like reading about them. If you could only see the black children play them in this sunny land I am sure you would enjoy it and want to join them. I have watched them often, and as often wished I had a camera to take living pictures of African children at play so that you children at home might be able to see with your own eyes something of what I have but feebly tried to describe to you.

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## CHAPTER VIII

## FAIRY TALES

ALL Africans are great story-tellers. At night round the fire, when darkness covers the land and the boys appetites are appeased, many are the tales told. Let me translate one or two for you.

## THE STORY OF NALING'ANG'A

Long ago there lived a man named Naling'ang'a. He was a very foolish man, for he smoked bhang, and the fumes of this deadly weed had run off with all his wisdom. One day the chief of the village in which Naling'ang'a lived ordered all the people into his gardens to hoe for him, so that the maize might not "walk" with the grass—that it, might not be overgrown.

All the people obeyed the chief's words and went early in the morning to the gardens, followed by the chief himself. But Naling'ang'a lingered on in the village to have a morning pipe of his favourite bhang. Afterwards, when all the people were already in the gardens hoeing away under the eye of the chief, Naling'ang'a came on alone. On his way he crossed over a stream and arrived at the plain near which were the chief's gardens.

Lying on the side of the path was an old skull that had been there for many a day, and which Naling'ang'a had often passed. But to-day, because he had been smoking bhang, he was annoyed at it, and took the handle of his hoe and struck the skull,

saying, " Tell me, what killed you ? " To his horror the skull moved, and said, " My tongue killed me."

Poor Naling'ang'a was dreadfully afraid, and his knees shook under him hearing this dead thing speak so. But he plucked up courage and struck it again to see if it was really true, and again the skull spoke the same words. Being unable to stand it any longer, for his courage at this second exhibition had deserted him, he turned and fled as fast as his tottering legs could carry him to where the people were digging in the chief's gardens, and lost no time in telling his story.

At first the people refused to believe him, but because of his earnestness and his frightened condition the chief ordered all the people to stop hoeing, and follow him back to the plain where he, the chief, would himself see this wonderful thing. Arrived at the spot the people stood round about in a frightened circle with Naling'ang'a and the chief in the centre. Naling'ang'a was brave now because of the crowd of people and, lifting his hoe, struck the poor skull a violent blow, saying, " Tell me, what killed you ? " But the skull answered not a word. Again and again he struck it and demanded it to tell, but never a word spoke it.

The people saw now that they had been deceived, and the chief was mad with rage at having been made appear foolish before the eyes of the people and at the loss of time from the hoeing. So he ordered poor Naling'ang'a to be put to death there and then, and his head to be cut off and thrown beside the skull as a warning to all to speak the truth.

When the execution was over and the people had all departed the skull turned round to poor Naling'-



ang'a's head, and said, "My friend, Naling'ang'a, tell me, what killed you?" And Naling'ang'a replied, "My tongue." "As with me," said the skull, "my tongue caused a great quarrel and the people killed me."

#### THE STORY OF THE FREEMAN AND HIS SLAVES

There was a freeman that had many slaves and he went with them on a journey. When they were on the journey the slaves sent the freeman, saying, "Go for water." But he refused, and the slaves themselves went and drew water. When they returned with the water the freeman said, "Give me some water to drink." But the slaves refused, saying, "We don't want you to drink our water. Go to the well and draw water for yourself." So the freeman had to go to the well himself. When he was about to drink, the slaves pushed him into the water and killed him. But a drop of blood leapt upwards and fell on a leaf of a tree, and thereupon became a bird and sang:—

"Ku! Ku! Ku!"

The slaves got ready for their journey, but the bird went before them and came to the village, and said, "They killed me. Make beer when the strangers come." When the slaves entered the house to drink the beer the people set fire to the house and burned them.

#### THE STORY OF THE CHILDREN AND THE SERPENT

There was a certain man that hoed his garden, and said, "Now that I have hoed my garden, what shall I do? These children finish the food in the garden."



Then he went to look for bark and made a rope out of it and put it into the garden. When the children said, "Let us steal," the rope became a serpent that drove off the children, who ran to the village, and said, "Father, in the garden yonder there is a snake." And he said, "Let us go there and see." When they came to the garden the father said, "Look now, that is a rope. You thought it was a snake. Is it that you were stealing the maize? You must never do so again."

Such are African fairy tales, but there is a very great difference between a written story and one told by word of mouth. The teller stands up and, with hands going and eyes rolling and body bending backwards and forwards, imitates whatever birds or beasts, their calls and their cries, there are in his tale. At intervals he sings out a line or two of chorus, which is taken up by the audience and sung with great delight. Many additions are made in the spoken tale, and the written one is but the shadow of the other.

## CHAPTER IX

### ANIMAL STORIES

Now let me get you a few animal stories of which I am sure there must be hundreds stored up in the hearts of the black boys and girls. Where they learn them I know not, but they all seem to be able to tell stories. I really do believe they are born with them in their hearts all ready for the telling.

Among the animals, strange to say, the rabbit is

considered the cunning one. White children are accustomed to hear of the sly fox who said the grapes were sour; his place in Africa is taken by Mr Rabbit. Many are the tricks he plays on animals big and small, and even on people. The foolish animal is the hyena, and on him very often falls the punishment that ought to be borne by the cunning rabbit.

#### THE STORY OF THE RABBIT AND THE ELEPHANT

A rabbit made friends with an elephant, and they agreed together to hoe a large garden. While they were busy hoeing, the head of the rabbit's hoe fell out, and as he could not see a stone on which to knock his hoe, he was at a loss to know what to do. Suddenly a good plan entered his head, and, turning to the elephant, he said, "Friend Elephant, let me knock in my hoe on your head." The elephant agreed, and the hoe was knocked in by the rabbit. Then they went on hoeing again. Not long after the head of the elephant's hoe fell off. So, turning to the rabbit, he said, "Friend Rabbit, let me knock in my hoe on your head." But the rabbit, being afraid that the elephant would kill him, refused and ran off. On his way he met a hyena, who asked him why he was running at such a break-neck speed. "Ah!" replied the rabbit, "the elephant has much meat in the garden yonder. Go to him and you will be sure to get a bit. I am running to get a knife to cut it up." When the elephant saw the hyena coming, he thought it was still the rabbit who had "bewitched" himself to be like another beast. So he caught him and killed him.

THE STORY OF THE RABBIT AND THE  
HIPPOPOTAMUS

A rabbit, going down to the river to drink, met a hippopotamus and began to speak to him. Not far away was an elephant feeding on the trees near the bank of the river. "Come, let us try our strength," said the rabbit to the hippopotamus, "you try to pull me into the water and I shall try to pull you to the bank, and whoever is pulled over must pay the other." But the hippopotamus would not listen to such a proposal and laughed, saying, "Why should I waste time pulling with a creature so small as you?" But the rabbit urged him very much to have a try, so at last he consented. Then the rabbit went off to find a rope, but in passing the elephant, who was feeding quietly, he challenged him to a similar trial of strength, but this time the rabbit was to try to pull the elephant into the water. Like the hippopotamus, the elephant at first refused. But in the end he consented. So the rabbit gave him one end of the rope, saying that he would go down into the water and begin to pull. When he reached the river, however, he gave the other end of the rope to the hippopotamus, saying he would now run back and begin to pull. Then the rabbit, pretending to go to pull his end of the rope, slyly lay down in the grass and watched. Then the two great animals began to pull and tug against one another but neither could pull the other over, and all the time the rabbit lay laughing in the grass. All day the great beasts heaved and tugged at the rope. About sunset, quite worn out, they gave up the tug-of-war. The rabbit ran to the river bank where the hippopotamus was standing exhausted

half out of the water with the sand all trampled round about. "Well," said the rabbit, "how did I pull?" The poor hippopotamus had to own up that he was beaten and agreed to pay. Thereupon the rabbit ran to where the elephant still panted amidst trampled grass and brushwood, and said, "Well, how did I pull?" The elephant also had to own defeat and agreed to pay. Thus was the rabbit made rich in a single day.

#### THE STORY OF THE RABBIT AND THE LION CUBS

A rabbit once wanted to wear a lion's skin, so he said, "Where shall I find one?" But his friends said, "You don't mean it. The lion is a fearful animal." But the rabbit said, "I shall deceive it." So he went to a lion's den where there were cubs, stood in the courtyard, and clapped his hands. The lioness came out and received his salutation and said, "Well, what?" And the rabbit replied, "I have come to stay." So the lioness said, "Pass into the house there and take care of the children. Remain with them, and I myself shall go to kill game." Then she went away to kill game. Not long afterwards the lioness came back and stood in the path and called out, saying, "Rabbit." And the rabbit said, "Here I am." And she said, "Take this meat. Are all the children well?" And the rabbit replied, "Yes, they are all well." "All right," said the lioness, "bring them that I may see them." So the rabbit brought them, and said, "This is one, this is another, and this another." In all there were three. Quite pleased, the lioness said, "Take the meat and give it them." The rabbit went and re-

ceived the meat, but ate it all himself and the children got none. Then the lioness went off to kill more meat. When she had gone the rabbit took one child, killed it, took off its skin, and went away to hide it. The lioness soon returned, bringing more game, and said, "Are the children well?" Bring them that I may see them." So the rabbit brought them, saying, "This is one, this is another, and this another," but one he brought twice. Again, well pleased, the lioness went away for more game, and the rabbit killed another cub, took off its skin, and went away and hid it. In the evening the lioness again returned, bringing meat, and said, "Are the children all well?" As usual the rabbit replied, "Yes, they are all well." So he showed the lioness the same cub three times, and said, "This is one, this is another, and this another." Again, well pleased, the lioness said, "Take this meat and give it them." But the rabbit ate it all, and afterwards killed the cub that was left, skinned it, and went off to hide the skin. Then, afraid of the return of the lioness, he went to get string. Next he cut a small slave stick and tied himself by the neck. Then he twisted cords and tied his legs and bound himself to the stick again, and with another cord tied his arms. Then he made a great noise, and called out, "War! War! War against the lion. War!" The lioness came bounding back, and said, "What is the matter?" So the rabbit said, "The children are all taken, the soldiers carried them off." And the lioness demanded, "Soldiers from where?" And the rabbit said, "I don't know. Untie me." The lioness set about untying, and the rabbit said, "Wait for me, I shall go in search of them." So the rabbit went away and found monkeys spinning

their tops, saying, "Go! Go!" But the rabbit said, "Yes, nonsense, but you should say, 'I have killed a lion and taken off his skin.'" The monkeys said, "Yes, very good," and the rabbit left the monkeys repeating these words. He himself went back and met the lioness, and said, "The children were killed by these monkeys." So the lioness said, "Deceive them, saying that we will do trade in tops." So the rabbit went back to the monkeys, and said, "Let us deal in these tops." So they said, "With what goods?" And the rabbit said, "With beans." Then the monkeys said, "Well, bring them that we may buy." So the rabbit went back and told all to the lioness, who said, "Weave a basket and tie me into it." And the rabbit wove a basket, tied in the lioness, and put a few beans on top, lifted the basket, and departed. When he arrived at their courtyard he found the monkeys spinning their tops. So he called out, "I have brought that merchandise." And they replied, "We shall buy it." Just then a monkey sent his top spinning, saying, "I have killed a lion's cub and have taken off its skin." So the rabbit whispered to the lioness, "Listen, those fellows killed the children;" then to the monkeys, "Let us go and sell in this house." Then the rabbit took a knife and cut the ropes that held the lioness, who sprang out upon the poor monkeys and killed them all. But the rabbit went for his skins and took them home and wore them.

#### THE STORY OF THE TORTOISE AND THE MONKEY

Once a tortoise and a monkey made friends, and the monkey said to the tortoise, "Friend Tortoise,



come to my home and visit." So the tortoise went and the monkey cooked food for him, but, wishing to play a trick on him, placed it on a high platform which the tortoise could not possibly reach up to. Then he called the tortoise, saying, " Friend Tortoise, go into the house and eat." When the tortoise went in expecting a feast he found the food so high up that he could not reach it. So he came out very angry, and said, " Friend Monkey, you have been insolent to me." So he went home, and brooded over the insult for three days. Then he sent a messenger to invite the monkey to his home, saying to himself, " Yon monkey was cheeky to me, I also will be cheeky to him." So when the monkey came he found food already cooked and eyed it greedily. But the tortoise said, " Friend Monkey, there is no water in the house, go down to the stream and wash your hands." So the monkey went down through the burned grass and washed his hands in anticipation of the feast. But in coming back from the stream he had to pass again through the burned grass and his hands were as black as ever. So seeing through the tortoise's cunning he got angry, and said, " My friend has played a trick on me, " and departed to his own home.

## CHAPTER X

### FINGER RHYMES AND RIDDLES

Now I have told you four African tales of animals, and perhaps you are tired of such stories. If, however, I can remember a very good one before I am finished writing to you I shall put it into this chapter.



Let me now tell you about the black boys and girls' riddles, and there are one or two nursery rhymes that I know of. I am sure you would like to hear them, so I shall write them down for you as they are spoken here, and then translate them for you. Here is one of them :—

“Uyu ndi mtecheteche,  
 Uyu ndi mpwache wa mteche,  
 Uyu ndi mkala pakati,  
 Uyu ndi mkomba mbale,  
 Uyu ndi chitsiru chache,  
 Tikumenya iwe : Go ! Go !”

Can you guess what this is all about ? You have a rhyme that means just the same. Well this is what these funny words mean :—

“This is the shaky little finger,  
 This is his younger brother,  
 This is the one in the middle,  
 This is the plate-scraper,  
 This is an old fool,  
 I beat you thus : Go ! Go !”

It is you see an African finger rhyme. You have all one of your own, but I am sure in it you never call your fore-finger a plate-scraper, nor your thumb an old fool. But if you had to eat without spoons and knives and forks, and wanted to make your plate very clean you would have to use your fore-finger a good deal, and you would then understand why the black children call it a plate-scraper.

This is another finger rhyme for counting up all the fingers :—

“ Mbewa zagwa ;  
 Zagweranji ?  
 Zagwera mapira ;  
 Ndikazikumbe ;  
 Ndiopa uluma.

“ Mzanga Likongwa,  
 Ali kukaku ;  
 Amanga mpanda ;  
 Ndikamtandize ;  
 Wata Kale.”

This is the English for it :

“ The mice have fallen ;  
 Why have they fallen ?  
 They have fallen for the millet ;  
 I go dig them ;  
 I fear to be bitten.

“ My friend Mr Weasel,  
 He is at the chief's house ;  
 He builds a fence ;  
 I go help him ;  
 He's finished long ago.”

Then about guesses. I have tried to pick out one or two just to let you hear what like they are. Many of the answers to riddles I have heard seemed to me to have little or no point in them. So it is with the stories. But when I have failed to see the joke and have not laughed the black boys have not failed. They have their own funny stories and laugh at them heartily. But our jokes they do not understand, nor do they play pranks on one another as white boys do. Let me try to tell you how you can make black boys and girls roar with laughter, and yet to a white man there is nothing to laugh about. If you are telling them about people scattering helter-

skelter and say that the people, "nalimenya," which means go off helter-skelter, the boys will go into fits of laughter. Now I can see nothing to laugh at in this, and I am sure you can't either, and, if another word had been used, neither would the black boy. But here is the peculiar thing. It is the "li" in the middle of the word that makes it funny to African children here.

"Menya" means "beat," but "limenya" means "run off helter-skelter." Again "Sesa" means "sweep," but "lisesa" means "run off helter-skelter;" and so on with a lot of other words, the addition of the syllable "li" makes them change their meanings entirely, and become "run off helter-skelter," and so very funny that black boys and girls cannot keep from laughing. Now for the guesses :—

"What is yonder and here at the same time?"

*Answer*—A shadow.

"I built a house with one post."

*Answer*—A mushroom.

"It goes yonder yet remains here."

*Answer*—A belt.

"I had a big garden, yet got no food from it."

*Answer*—The hair of the head.

"I built my house without any door."

*Answer*—An egg.

"My hen laid an egg among thorns."

*Answer*—The tongue and the teeth.

I think you will understand these answers to the above guesses, but what do you think of this one?

"In my mother's house there is money."

*Answer*—Baldness.

I am certain you and I would never have thought of such an answer.

Here are one or two of their proverbs :—

“Sleep knows no friendship, has no favourite.”

“If your neighbour’s beard takes fire, quench it ;”

which latter means—

“Help your neighbour now, for some day you may need help.”

By means of these guesses the African children while away the time and amuse themselves on wet days or on cold nights round the fire by asking them from one another. Now let me close this chapter by telling you the story of

### THE RABBIT, THE LION, AND THE WILD PIG

There was once a lion that knew all about medicine. He did a good trade with people who came to buy it. One day some people from a far country came and begged him to come with them to heal their sick. So the lion agreed, and set about to get a servant to carry his bundle on the journey. Finding a wild pig near, he called him, saying, “Come, friend Pig, will you go on that journey ?” and the pig agreed. So the lion gave him the load to carry.

When they were on the way the lion said to the pig, “Look there, Master Pig, that is the medicine for porridge. If they make porridge for us at the end of our journey you must run and get some of these leaves.” The pig said, “All right,” and they went on their journey.

While they were passing another bush the lion said again, “Look there, Master Pig, that is the medicine

for rice. If they make rice you must run and get some of these leaves." The pig again said, "All right," and they continued their journey.

When they reached the village of the sick people the lion and pig were well received. In the evening porridge was cooked for them, and the lion said to the pig, "Master Pig, go and get yon leaves." So Master Pig ran off to get the leaves. When he came back with them he found that the lion had finished all the porridge. So that night Master Pig went to bed hungry. Next evening the people cooked rice, and the lion said to the pig, "Master Pig, go and get yon leaves;" and Master Pig set off in a hurry to bring the leaves. But when he got back, all puffing and blowing, he found that the lion had just finished the rice, and he had to go hungry to bed.

Next day they returned home, and the poor pig arrived at his village in a famished condition, to the great sorrow of his wife and children.

Not long afterwards other people came requesting the services of Dr Lion to heal their sick, and he agreed to go.

Looking around for a carrier he spied the rabbit, and said, "Come, friend Rabbit, will you go on that journey?" and the rabbit agreed. So the lion gave him his load to carry.

When they were on the way the lion said to the rabbit, "Master Rabbit, do you see that bush? That is the medicine for porridge. If they make porridge for us at the village you must run and get these leaves." "All right," said the rabbit, and they continued their journey. But they had not gone far when the rabbit stopped, and said, "Where is my knife; I must have left it where we rested. Let me

run back to get it." "All right," said the lion, "don't be long." So the rabbit ran back, pulled some leaves from the medicine bush, and hid them in the load. When he reached the lion they resumed their journey. Soon the lion stopped again at another bush, and said, "Master Rabbit, do you see that bush? That is medicine for rice. If they cook rice for us at the village you must run and get these leaves." The rabbit said, "All right," and they went on their way.

But in a short time the rabbit stopped, and said, "Where is my knife? I must have left it where we rested. Let me run back for it." The lion was very angry this time, and said, "What kind of a servant are you, always losing your knife? Don't be long." So the rabbit ran back not to find his knife but to pull the medicine leaves for rice, which he hid in his bundle. When he made up on the lion again they continued their journey and soon arrived at the village.

In the evening porridge was cooked for the visitors, and the lion said to the rabbit, "Master Rabbit, go and get yon leaves." So the rabbit untied his bundle and produced the leaves. The lion was so angry at seeing the leaves thus produced that he could not eat a bite, and the rabbit had all the porridge to himself. Next evening rice was cooked for them, and the lion said to the rabbit, "Master Rabbit, go for yon leaves." But the rabbit again just opened his load and produced the leaves, and the lion was so sick and angry that he could not touch the rice, which the rabbit ate all to himself.

Next day they started on their homeward journey, and the first night slept in the same house, the lion

in a bed, the rabbit on a piece of bark. During the night the rabbit said out aloud, "He who sleeps on bark will be fresh for his journey in the morning, but he who sleeps in a bed will walk heavily and with pain." The lion on hearing this got out of bed, saying, "You little one, get off that bark, I myself will sleep there." So they changed sleeping places. In the middle of the night the rabbit got up and lit a fire while the lion slept. The heat of the fire soon caused the bark to shrivel up and tightly enclose the sleeping giant. Then the rabbit ran off home and left him.

In the morning great roars were heard coming from the house and the people, wondering what had befallen Dr Lion, rushed in and found him struggling to free himself. With their axes they soon had him out, and he went home a hungry and sorrowful beast. When his wife and children saw him looking so thin, they set up a great crying.

And so people who believe that they are very clever, will soon find others more clever than they. The lion thought himself very cunning when he deceived the poor pig, but he found the rabbit too much for him.

## CHAPTER XI

### FOOD AND ORNAMENTS

THE principal dish of the African is a kind of maize porridge made rather thick, so as to hold together in lumps. It is for flour to make this porridge that the women are continually pounding at the mortars.



The porridge is always eaten with something tasty to send it down, and is never eaten without this relish. Now this relish may be simply juicy leaves got in the bush and boiled as we boil cabbage, or it may be meat of some kind no matter what, or it may be fish no matter how high, but it is oftenest beans—porridge and beans being the everyday food. African children have but two regular meals in the day and the porridge one is the afternoon meal. The forenoon one may be made of sweet potatoes, or green maize or pumpkins, or cucumbers—anything that does not require much cooking on the part of the mothers. But from early morning onwards the children always have an eye for anything that will help to appease their hunger.

Thus the boys go off early with their bows and arrows to shoot birds, or they may go digging for field mice, or setting traps for any small kind of animal that may be foolish enough to enter them. These little creatures are skinned and roasted, spitted on bamboos, and kept ready for porridge time. At certain seasons of the year a kind of caterpillar is gathered to be roasted to make relish. I have seen children with their hands full of yellow-green crawling things as proud as if they had been a handful of sweets. Then when the sky is dark with locusts the children are glad. Knowing the locusts cannot fly till the sun has warmed them, the boys and girls go out early in the morning and gather baskets full of them. The legs and wings are torn off and the bodies roasted. Then again at the time when the winged white ants are issuing forth from underground to fly off and make another home, the cunning children place a pot over the hole and catch hundreds. These

also they roast and consider delicious. Their sweets are very few—wild honey and sugar-cane. They do like sugar-cane, and tear it and munch it with their strong white teeth. It is very sweet and not unpleasant to chew. But a white man must get it cut into little bits for him before he can enjoy it. He cannot eat it as the black people do.

Some of the tribes eat frogs and snakes and land-crabs and snails, but many of them do not. Those who do not eat such things look down upon those who do, and consider them savages and altogether to be despised. Then again in every tribe there are certain superstitious customs as regards food. A mother will warn her child, saying, "My child, you must never eat rabbit. If you eat rabbit your body will be covered with sores." So this child will refrain from rabbit, and so on with other kinds of meat, each child has something or other that is forbidden to him.

I remember once, when some boys of mine had gone rabbit-hunting, asking a very small boy who had been left behind if he was looking forward to the feast that was to come when the other boys returned, and how he would enjoy rabbit. "I don't eat rabbit," he replied, in a disconsolate voice. I asked him why. "Does not everyone, even the white man, eat rabbit!" "Yes," he replied, "but my mother forbade me to eat rabbit, saying if I did, I would be covered with itch." I advised him to try but he was afraid. Later on in the day, towards sunset, after the boys had returned from the woods. I saw the little disconsolate one all smiles. He was holding in his hand two miserable field mice, and was as happy as a king. The other boys had re-

membered he did not eat rabbit, and had put off half an hour to capture some mice for him that he might be able to join in the feast.

Besides the food from the gardens there are many bush fruits that the African children eat. So, as far as food is concerned, the black boys and girls are very well off. They have none of the pleasant things you may buy with your pennies. But then they know nothing of your nice things, and so they do not feel the want of them. Give the African child bananas and sugarcane and ground nuts, what you call monkey nuts, I think, and he is as happy as you with your toffy and chocolate and other sweets.

When a black boy or girl gets up in the morning, he or she has just a small wash. The real wash comes later on in the day when it is warmer. But they are very particular over their teeth and take very good care of them. In keeping them clean they use toothbrushes which they make out of little pieces of the wood of a certain tree about the length of a lead pencil but rather shorter and stouter. One end is cut and cut into again and again and teased out till it makes a very good tooth brush, and with it the black boy keeps his teeth in good condition. Of course it must be easy for him, because he can open his mouth so very wide.

At the real washing he goes down to a quiet pool and has good fun in the water with his companions. I have often come across little groups of them, and, of course, when a white man comes along the children squat down doubled up to try to hide their nakedness, making themselves just like a group of brown giant frogs. Their feet they clean with broken pieces of rock, and, would you believe it, the soles of their feet,

and the palms of their hands are white. It is strange, but so it is. Their feet, too, are very large and strong compared with ours, but their hands are generally very neat and shapely. On these feet they can walk mile after mile and not feel tired. If a small white boy walked five miles on a journey and five miles back he would boast of his endurance. But it is a common thing for a small black boy to walk twenty and even thirty miles in a single day and think nothing about it. In fact, if he could not do it, he would consider himself a weakling.

Of course in cold weather the children do not wash at all, and, in some places, when the grown-up people are not particular, the children wash but seldom. But on the whole they like to be clean, especially after having come into contact with white men, for most white men insist on the black children keeping themselves clean.

If you had a black woolly head, like those of the African children, how would you do your hair? You would find all your brushes useless, and your combs would break on the first trial. They would not be nearly strong enough to get through the mass of short curls. Have the black children no combs then? Oh, yes! peculiar combs they make, the teeth of which point out like fingers, and with these they comb their woolly pates. But it is in arranging their hair that they excel. One boy will train a tuft of hair over his forehead to grow up like a horn. Another will think he ought to shave out bald spaces. Some cut the hair on both sides and leave a ridge in the middle like a cock's comb, while others tie the hair with grasses into little tufts, and make their heads like miniature cabbage



A BATHING POOL.





gardens. And after a death in the family the hair is shaved clean off altogether, and the black boy appears with a head like an ostrich egg. Feathers and sometimes flowers are stuck into the hair as decorations.

Teeth, too, come in for some attention. They are not always allowed to grow as nature wills. In some of the tribes the boys and girls teeth are filed by their mothers, each tribe having its own peculiar way of filing. Sometimes all the teeth are cut into little notches. Sometimes only the two upper front ones are done. But the custom is dying out, and many of the children of the present generation are not made to submit to such an indignity. Tattooing is also practised by many tribes. Face, arms, breast, and back are often done. Again difference of tribes is shown by these markings. This is how it is performed. The cuts are first made and allowed a day or two to heal partly. They are then opened up again and charcoal rubbed in. The wounds are then allowed to heal which they do as broad black raised-up lines. These tatoo marks are quite different from what is seen on some white people at home. They are not drawings, but simply little lines, some straight, some curved, done into a certain tribal design.

In some tribes the ears are pierced and the hole made rather large. So large are they in some cases that I have seen a native carry a roasted mouse hanging through his ear.

I have already told you about the ring in the upper lip called the "pelele," so I shall not mention it again. But some of the women who have given up the "pelele" have taken to wearing a button of

lead in one side of the nose, which, from our point of view, does not improve their appearance.

Their persons they adorn with anklets and bracelets of brass. But in places where there are plenty of elephants one finds the girls wearing great ivory bracelets made from the tusks. All kinds of grass bracelets are plaited and worn by young girls who can't afford to have better ones, and I have sometimes seen a necklace made by stringing parts of locust's legs and beads together.

Of the beads there is an infinite variety, bought from the trader. These are strung together in many ways and made into bracelets and necklaces and various other things which only the patience of African children could produce.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE AFRICAN'S BELIEF

IN this chapter we shall tell about something altogether different from what you have been reading. We shall go into the spirit land of the African children, and we shall try to find out something of what they believe about God.

In the great black part of Africa there are no temples and wonderful gods to write about. There are no old books to be found containing the wisdom of their forefathers written down and preserved through long ages. In fact there is not very much in native African belief that can be made very interesting to white boys and girls. But I shall try

to do my best to let you understand something about it.

Some people at home think that the heathen tribes of Africa know nothing at all about God. But it is not so. They do know something, be it only a very very little. In some tribes it is so very little as to be almost nothing, and shows us how far they have fallen away from a knowledge of their Creator. Let me tell you what some of the tribes here believe about God.

God, our loving heavenly Father, is to them but a far-away spirit whom they call the old, old one, or the great, great one. He made the world and everything in it and sends rain and sunshine, and is all-powerful. But He is very far away from us and takes little interest in the people of the earth.

When people die, their spirits, they say, go to the land of this old, old one. Spirit villages are there, I have heard it said, inhabited by the spirit folk. As a man was on earth so is he in the land of the spirits. So a chief on earth remains a chief in spirit land. Now, the spirits of the chiefs are supposed to be on very intimate terms with the old, old one, and are allowed to do almost whatever they like with the affairs of the people on earth. So it is the spirit of the dead chief that receives the sacrifices and prayers of the people. The old, old one is felt to be so far away and so indifferent that he is passed over, in some tribes forgotten altogether, and the spirit of the chief receives the homage due to the great, great one, because the people feel that he, the chief, has a personal interest in them.

The more famous, generally the more fierce, a chief was on earth in his life-time the more is his help

asked for after he is dead, and has gone to the land of the spirits. It is not considered wise to neglect him in case he revenge himself upon the people.

The spirits of the common people are just ordinary inhabitants of spirit land and are of no account, except to their near relatives. A man in private matters of his own may seek the aid of the spirit of his father or of his grandfather. But on the whole, it is the spirit of the chief whom the people knew and were familiar with that is prayed to and receives the sacrifices of the people.

The spirits when they wish to speak to the people may enter into any person and cause that person to rave like a madman. He retires to the darkness of a hut while his fit of madness lasts. His sayings are not set aside as mere idle words, but are remembered and repeated to the interpreter, generally an old person, who explains to the people that under cover of these words spoken in delirium by the person possessed the spirits mean that so and so should be done. Dreams also are thought of as journeyings to the land of the spirits.

Now I think that will be enough about the spirits for you to understand a little of what many of the African children believe about the Great Spirit who made everything. It is only when the children are big that they are told all these things about the spirits. The people do not like to talk about such things, and the children avoid the places where the spirits are supposed to come and visit. They are afraid to give offence to the spirits, I think, and, in fact, all their sacrifices seem to be made with the idea of appeasing the anger and earning the good will of the spirits.

Sometimes the sacrifices are made at the base of a tree. Very often a small hut is built in which sacrifice is offered up. The offerings are of flour or native beer, and at other times of animals. Only small bits of the flesh of the sacrificed animal are offered, the rest of the meat being eaten by the people. The bits offered up are wrapped in leaves and placed at the root of the sacrificial tree. It is the chief who offers up the sacrifice and says the prayers. In times of great calamity large sacrifices are held in which several chiefs join their people together and make prayer to the departed ones. Sacrifices are also made for rain, for success in hunting, for safety in travelling, and for freedom from sickness.

The prayers are generally very simple requests like the following one for safety, "Watch over me, my forefather, who died long ago, and tell the great spirit at the head of my race from whom came my mother." Here is a short account of a sacrifice for rain. "The chief goes to the spirit hut to offer sacrifice for rain and the people stand round about having brought the meat for the sacrifice. Then the chief begins to complain to the spirits saying, 'Give us rain and do not harden your heart against us.' With many other prayers he continues to implore, while the people round about clap their hands, and some of the women sing :—

‘Kokwe Kolole, Kokwe Kolole  
Mbvula ya kuno sikudza  
Kokwe Kolole.’

which means :—

‘May there come rain, sweeping rain,  
The rain here has not come ;  
May there come rain, sweeping rain.’”

When the rain does come the people believe that it came because they appeased the anger of the great, great one with their sacrifice.

But wherever the Gospel of Jesus is preached the people are learning that there has been offered up for them by God Himself one great sacrifice which has redeemed the fallen sons of men—the sacrifice of His only Son on Calvary's Cross.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE AFRICAN IN SICKNESS

WHEN the children of Africa are well and strong, their lives are carelessly happy, so long as they are not hungry. When they are ill, all the happiness departs, and they become very miserable. You may have thought that because black children can eat almost anything that they are never ill. But that is not so. They suffer, I believe, a good deal more than white children do. For simple troubles they get no treatment at all. They are just ill, they say, and lie on their mats near the fire or sit huddled up over it until they are better. These little complaints are mostly all of the stomachache kind, caused by reckless eating of anything the children can pick up. I have seen black children eat fruit that was quite green and hard—such as would kill little whites—and still live. And when you try to explain that these things can hurt they just smile to themselves and go on swallowing them, for they don't believe you. Headaches are treated by binding the head



round the temples tightly with a piece of string. Sometimes, if the headache is very painful, the sufferer is bled. Little cuts are made on the throbbing temples with a sharp knife and the blood allowed to flow.

It is the mothers who are the doctors and nurses of the children. Very often the sick child is attended by his grandmother. These old ladies are supposed to know a great deal about medicine; and they do know many plants and roots that are useful in simple illnesses. For mumps, which many black children call "masigwidi," no medicine is given. The mothers tell the children to go to the mortar, put their heads in and call "Mooo!" I don't know whether this simple remedy is a certain cure or not.

The following method of getting rid of the disease is considered to be very effective. "The person sick with "Masigwidi" goes in the evening to the house of another person and claps his hands in salutation. When the inmates reply the owner of the house takes mumps, and the former sick one runs off cured."

When a child is seriously ill the doctor is called in, as is the case with white children. The disease has gone beyond the skill of the mothers and grandmothers, so better advice must be got. The doctor, when he comes, is first of all paid a fee. A few fowls are caught and handed over to him. Then he begins to treat the sufferer. He keeps his medicine in horns, not having any bottles. And in these horns are many weird mixtures. Like the grandmothers', most of his medicine is made from plants and roots, yet it is wonderful how well they get on with these simple things. When the patient recovers, another

fee is charged by the doctor. But if the child dies, unless if be from some well-known disease like small-pox, death may be attributed to witchcraft. Someone has used bad magic against the patient and nothing could save him.

In the presence of serious trouble, however, these doctors are very helpless, and when accidents have happened and bones are broken, and internal injuries are inflicted, the sufferers are beyond their aid. Here then is the opportunity for the medical missionary from the home land. He is able again and again to help the people when they are most helpless. Thus he gains their confidence, and a way to their hearts for the Gospel of Christ. His work is a daily putting into practice of the teaching of Our Saviour, and the lesson learned from it is not lost on the African.

African children suffer a great deal from ulcers, especially on their legs. These are painful sores that break out on them, and if neglected, as they are, alas! too often, there is grave danger to the limb. Sores on the toes are common. You may see in almost any village, children running about with some of their toes half eaten away. These sores are caused by an insect—the penetrating flea or jigger which bores its way under the skin and seeks in the warm flesh a cosy place to bring forth its young. It generally selects a place under the toe nail as most suitable. When it enters first, the jigger is very small. But in a few days it grows big and may become the size of a small pea. If these pests are not promptly removed, sores break out on the toes and the toes crumble away. Now little children are unable to take them out, and if their mothers neglect to do so, the children lose their toes. I have often seen boys

armed with stout thorns picking the jiggers out of one another's feet. The process I know, from experience, is sometimes painful, for the toe under the nail is very tender, yet the black children seldom wince when the jiggers are being taken out. They are brave little things in the presence of physical pain, but they really do not feel so keenly as you children do. Their feelings are a good deal blunter than yours, and so they do not dread pain as much as you do, for they suffer less.

There are some diseases found among African children that are not found among white children. Of these leprosy, the most dreadful, used long ago to afflict white children too. It is the terrible disease from which our tender-hearted Saviour freed some poor sufferers when He was on earth. Alas! one comes across it now and again among the black races of Africa.

I remember once meeting a leper. He was a bright lad and was attending a class for Bible instruction. Some of the joints of his fingers were gone at the time I saw him, but he had been a leper for some years then. He told me that his father had been a leper, and that he himself began to suffer from leprosy when he was a boy of some twelve years of age. The beginning was like this. One morning he awoke and felt his hands and arms sore as if they had been burned in spots here and there during the night. So he blamed the other boys who slept in the hut for playing tricks on him with a burning stick. But they all denied it. It was the beginning of the fatal disease.

The Africans have no treatment for the leper. He simply lives his life in the village so long as he looks

after himself or can get anyone to care for him. But when his disease has gone on year after year, and he is no longer able to walk or do anything for himself, or has no friend to care for him, the people used to have, and still have in many places, a savage way of dealing with him. Back from the village a bit in the bush a little hut was built, and one day the leper was carried out, taken to the hut, shut into it with a supply of food, and left to his fate. Either he perished from hunger or was devoured by a wild beast, or was burned to death by a bush-fire. The natives firmly believe that such lepers are transformed into wild animals.

I once heard how a poor sufferer was otherwise dealt with. He had been ill for years with an ulcer on one of his legs. The sore had been neglected at first and then it got too bad for treatment. But as native doctors cannot cut off limbs as white doctors can, the poor fellow could now do nothing but lie about his village, and depend on his friends to help him. As he got worse and worse, and less able to help himself, his friends became fewer and fewer. At last he became such a source of trouble to the people that the men decided to put an end to it. Accordingly they went up the hillside near and dug a grave with a small niche to one side at the bottom. Then they returned to the village and carried off the helpless sufferer. He guessed at their intention and piteously implored them to desist. "Where are you going with me?" he said. "Do not leave me alone on the cold hillside." But they were deaf to his appeals. When they reached the grave they quickly lowered the miserable wretch down, placed him in the niche at the side, shut him in with a mat,

drove in a few stakes, filled up the grave, and left him.

Not long ago I passed through a village where some years ago I had made the acquaintance of the head man. He was then a hale and hearty old fellow, fond of his joke and his snuff-box. But now what a change. I found his people mostly gone and he himself but the wreck of what he had been. Everything round about had a neglected look. Some disease or other had laid him low and friends had gone. I found him sitting on a mat close to a fire. His poor skeleton legs were firmly bound at knees and ankles with cords made of bark. He had tried many doctors, he said, and had paid for much medicine, and now he had nothing to do but sit and wait for the end. He was too old to visit a white doctor; he was accustomed to the medicine of his own people and would not try that of strangers.

There is a great deal of suffering in African villages silently and patiently borne; and the white doctor can do a great deal to alleviate it. I can assure you children that your pennies put into the missionary box to help to support hospitals in heathen lands are not given in vain; and there is no part of missionary work that more deserves your help. Remember what our Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

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## CHAPTER XIV

## MAGIC MEDICINE

IN the previous chapter we were talking about doctors and medicine. In this chapter we shall hear more about medicine, but of another kind. Medicine in Africa is of two kinds—one for the lawful purpose of healing the sick, the other for the unlawful purpose of bewitching people and doing other dark deeds. It is when we begin to look into all that surrounds this unlawful medicine that we meet “the heathen in his darkness.”

The black people firmly believe in the power of medicines to bewitch, to enable the possessor to steal or to do some other thing equally bad. Anything that happens for which they cannot account, they ascribe to witchcraft medicine. The white people are supposed to be the possessors of great stores of such medicine, and from that to obtain their power. This belief crops up on all sides in their daily life, for there are unlawful medicines for almost everything. All one requires to know is where to find a dealer in such medicine, and he will make it to your order, no matter what you may want it for. He will give you medicine to bury against your enemy that he may die, or he will make you medicine that will enable you to kill game easily. Everything can be done by the power of medicine.

The darkest part of this belief in medicines is that in which certain people are supposed to possess



power to cause the death of others that they may feast upon their dead bodies. Such horrible people are called "Afiti" in this part of Africa. They are supposed through their medicine to have powers of making themselves invisible at will, of going great distances in the smallest interval of time, of changing themselves into beasts, etc. These "Afiti" are supposed to gather during the night round the grave of any recently buried person to call the dead man out and to feast upon him. The bark of a fox or the hoot of an owl at night is said to be the signal call for these wretches to assemble for their awful meal.

When a mysterious death has happened in a village it is at once blamed upon one of the "Afiti." But who he is nobody can tell. It may be one's very own father, for the "Afiti" during the day retain their ordinary form, one never can tell. Great fear hangs over the village for each suspects his neighbour of being the cause of the death. Then the witch-finder is sent for. He, or she—for sometimes the witch-finder is a woman—comes laden with medicines and charms and stays in the village. No one now will be seen out of doors after dark in case of being suspected. After learning all the gossip of the village and finding out who was on bad terms with the dead man, the witch-finder proceeds to business.

The people are assembled to the sound of a large drum and stand in a circle in fear and trembling. The witch-finder now begins to dance and spin round and work himself up to a high pitch of excitement, during which he rushes here and there among the frightened people, smells their hands for traces of blood, and finally calls out the name of the guilty person.

Then the poison ordeal is tried. A poison draught is made up with bark from a certain tree and the accused is given it to drink. Should he happen to vomit it up again after having taken it, he is declared to be innocent, and payment is made to him. But should he happen to die, what further proof was necessary? The village is now clear of the evil one, and great rejoicings are made and payment given to the witch-finder. In this way hundreds and thousands of innocent people have met their end in Darkest Africa.

This belief in "Afiti" is one of the most difficult to deal with which the missionary encounters. You try to explain that God never gave people such power over one another, but although agreeing with you outwardly, they secretly cling to the old belief and their faith in the poison cup, for there are among them people foolish enough to imagine themselves possessed of "Afiti" powers who actually open graves and steal bits, especially fingers, from the dead. It is the occurrence of such cases that causes the people to cling to their belief.

Among the negro peoples the makers of medicine are supposed to have power over the spirits and to "bind" them into what are called "fetiches." A fetich may consist of any convenient-sized object. It may be a small horn or a snail's shell or a stone. But it has power only when the witch-doctor has imprisoned a spirit in it. This he does of course for payment. And fetiches are made to meet every wish of the human heart. You can obtain them to make you brave, or wise, or cunning, or to prevail over your enemy, or to prevent theft, or to be successful in the chase or anything you wish.

In this part of Africa when a lion begins to prey upon human beings, he is supposed to be one of the "Afiti" who, to satisfy his craving for human flesh, has transformed himself into a lion for the time being. At a certain village on the river Shiré several people had been taken by a large crocodile which was well known because of its boldness. This animal was believed not to be a real crocodile by the people of the village, but to be one of the "Afiti" transformed. After the brute had taken off several people, one of the men of the village determined to put an end to the tragedies. Seizing a spear he boldly went into the water to try conclusions with the monster. But he too in spite of his medicine was taken off and only a reddish tinge on the water marked the spot where he had been seized and dragged down.

Quite recently I asked a boy to go an errand for me. His destination was about fifteen miles away and he could not possibly arrive before dark. But the road was perfectly safe or I would not have asked him to go. At first he did not want to go, declaring he was sure "Afiti" would catch him whenever it became dark. If a fire is seen in the distance where no fire should be, it is at once put down to the presence of the dreaded corpse eaters. I remember another boy who not long ago insisted in maintaining that one night an "Mfiti" had come and sat on his chest for a long time, while he remained in mortal terror lest it should begin to tear him. Explanations of nightmare were of no avail. The boy firmly believes to this day that he had a narrow escape from being devoured.

Some years ago I remember seeing a medicine man surrounded by a crowd of natives. He was

telling them that he had medicine to protect him from being hit by any stone that might be thrown at him. His word was just accepted and no native ever thought of lifting a stone to try. When a white man offered to have a throw at him, he objected, saying that his medicine had power over black people only. Another man, I can recall, produced a horn containing a very powerful medicine that enabled the possessor to enter unseen into any house by simply stepping through the wall. He was asked to display its powers on the white man's house. He also declined saying that his medicine was made against black men's houses only, which are made of grass, and not against white men's, that are built of brick.

What a magnificent faith these poor black people have in their magic medicine! If it fails, it fails only because someone is working against them with more powerful medicine still, and a new supply must be got. The belief in the medicine remains as strong as ever. If this unwavering faith could only be transformed in a single day to Him who is the Light of the World, what a change would come over the Dark Continent.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE DANCE AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Now I am sure you have learned a great deal about the African people and their children, yet there are two important things I have not written about, and these are their dances and their musical instru-

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ments. I had intended to put this part into the chapter on games, but I thought I had better not, although the dance is considered a game by the African children. In the hot season when the moon is full, the whole country side resounds with the beating of drums, and the shrill voices of the dancers are borne far on the warm night wind. There are many kinds of drums from the deep bass to the high tenor, They are beaten with the hands and on a still night the deep boom of the bass drum can be heard for miles interrupted by the short snap of the smaller ones. The time seems at first very irregular, and for a white man difficult to follow. But the dancers move out and in and round about, and keep up the game till sunrise. Unfortunately the dances are not all harmless ones, and the less said about some of them the better.

Of musical instruments the African children have quite a large number. One of their favourites is called a "Sese." I can best describe it to you by calling it an African mandoline. The body is made out of a large dry gourd and the strings are made by twisting threads together till the desired thickness and strength is obtained. The left hand fingers are used for pressing down the strings which are "tweaked" by the fingers of the right hand. The music is very pleasing when the "Sese" player is a short distance off. The tunes are quite unlike anything white children hear at home, and charm one by their quaintness. I have tried to play the instrument, but of course failed. The boys themselves are not all able to play the "Sese." Only those who are musical can, and after much patient practice.



Another instrument with which the boys amuse themselves is called the "Sansi." It is the African piano, and is played a great deal by river boys. The sounding board in the "Sansi" is made out of a flat piece of wood about six or seven inches square and about an inch deep, hollowed out. Two rows of little keys are fixed along this board. The keys are sometimes made of wood but in good instruments are of iron. These keys are all different sizes, and are arranged so as to produce a kind of a scale, pleasing to the African ear and not unpleasant to us. The instrument is grasped in both hands and the keys are skilfully played by the thumbs and forefingers of both hands. Sometimes these instruments are bedecked with beads and pieces of shells which cause a sort of buzzing accompaniment to the music. A good deal of skill is necessary to play the "Sansi" properly, and it is only a boy here and there who can do it well. Like the "Sese," the "Sansi" sounds more pleasant when a bit away.

The flute is another source of amusement to the African boy. He makes his own instrument out of a piece of reed, but he can appreciate a good tin whistle from across the sea. From the reed he takes the pith and bores three or four holes in the hollow tube, and his flute is ready. The notes produced from the native flute always seem to me to be of a weird melancholy nature. The same three or four notes are blown over and over again, and become in time rather monotonous to the white man.

Then there is the African violin called the "mgoli." It consists of a drum through which sticks are passed. There is one string drawn tight over a bridge which stands in the drum. This primitive fiddle is played





DRILL REPLACES THE DANCE



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with a bow. It is not so difficult to play as the others already described, but its music is much more monotonous.

The African boys are also expert at playing on a wooden dulcimer which they call "Nangolingondo." Pieces of hard wood tuned to the African scale are laid across two pieces of palm stem and are fixed in their places by pegs. Then two players squat down on opposite sides of the dulcimer armed with a stick in each hand. One player leads off with a few flourishes and is joined by the other player whose notes overlap and yet fit into and between those of the first player's in a marvellous manner. The music is fast and furious, but cannot be kept up for a long stretch at a time. As with the other instruments, this one is heard to advantage some distance off.

The buzzing of a certain kind of beetle is also made to do duty with children as a kind of toy instrument. The unfortunate beetle is caught and fixed up with grass so that he cannot get away, although his wings are free to buzz with as much as he likes. In order to make this beetle-music the insect is held by the grass in front of the opened mouth. According as the mouth is opened so does the buzzing sound vary.

There are many other kinds of African musical instruments, mostly of a very simple kind, giving forth but a note or two peculiar to the African and beloved by him. The children are on the whole not unmusical and can be trained to sing very sweetly indeed. But I am sure they like their own songs best.

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## CHAPTER XVI

## HINDRANCES TO THE GOSPEL

Now I think I had better not write much more about Africa and its children lest I tire you. There are many other interesting things one would like to tell you but I am afraid this book is already quite long enough. In India and in China and in other lands I am sure it is harder than it is in Africa to win the people for Christ. Yet there are many hindrances too in the black man's way.

If all Africa is to be Christ's, then Mohammedanism in the north must be overcome, and must be prevented from creeping down southwards. It is already well over the equator, especially on the east coast, and, if left unhindered, will spread right onwards. But the Church of Christ at home must see that this does not happen, and Christians must put forth all their strength in the cause of their Lord and Master. And you children too have your part to play, a part which is told you in this little hymn of which I have copied two verses :—

“The fields are all white  
And the reapers are few ;  
We children are willing,  
But what can we do  
To work for our Lord in His Harvest ?

“We'll work by our prayers,  
By the offerings we bring,  
By small self-denials ;  
The least little thing  
May work for our Lord in His Harvest.”

Another enemy of Christ in Africa is the native's belief in the customs and superstitions of their forefathers. The old people cling to these, and tell the children that the Gospel is only white men's stories. They die hard these old superstitions, but they are slowly and surely disappearing before the light of God's message. To obey Christ means that a great deal of the old life must be given up and put away altogether ; and it is here that the struggle begins. Temptations to drift back into the old way of living beset the African Christian on all sides. They come from without and from within, and only the word of God planted in his heart can keep him from falling.

Polygamy is one of the great obstacles in his path. I wonder if you know what that big word means. In words it means that the men may marry many wives, but in reality it means that the women and children are living in conditions that give them but little chance of rising out of the darkness by which they are surrounded. I remember how much surprised I was when told that a certain little girl, who had been at a village school but who was now withdrawn, was married. She was not really married of course, only "bespoken" as it were, by a big bearded man, who already had more than one wife. The girl had therefore been taken from school and was lost to Mission influence. In Africa the girls have but little of the happy girlhood known in England, for they step from childhood right into womanhood.

There is another enemy of Christ in Africa that I do not care to write to you about, because it comes from our own race, but it would not be fair to make no mention of it whatever. The force of example goes a long long way in Africa, and often does a great

deal more than words. It is what you *do* rather than what you *say* that first attracts the heathen. Now if a careless white man forgets this and like the prodigal son in the far-off country gives himself up to the evil ways of living, he is doing a great deal of harm to Christ's Kingdom in Africa, and is putting a serious stumbling block in the way of the poor black people. If such white men would but remember that they come from a Christian land and behave towards their ignorant black neighbours as Christian gentlemen this enemy of the Gospel would soon be laid low.

Let me now tell you a little how missionary work among the heathen Africans is carried on. In different missions the work is carried on in different ways, but the end is always the same—that the Gospel be preached to the heathen.

Many of the missions divide their work into four parts. One is called Evangelistic—that is the part of the work in which the Gospel is preached to the people. Another is called Medical because doctors and nurses join in the mission work to heal the sick and help the helpless. Another part is Educational—the teaching of the people in school, so that they may be able to read the Word of God. The last part is called Industrial, for in it the African Christians are taught trades to show them that work is not for slaves only, and to make them useful members of the community.

Of course in every mission you may not find all those four departments of work. Some missions are mainly Evangelistic, others Industrial, but in all large missions in Africa you generally find the four. In the evangelistic work the missionary, fresh



from home, is at a great disadvantage till he has mastered the native language. Then this difficulty over, he finds the way open to the black man's heart. Experience however is showing us more and more that it is not the white man who will evangelise Africa, but the African, and the work of the white missionary is more and more being reduced to the training of the native evangelists who will carry the message of love to the people.

Hospital, School, and Industrial work have, in Africa, been practically forced upon the missionaries. The native of Africa sick is most helpless, and the native of Africa well is most indifferent to sickness in others. Hence the constant ministration to his own sick folks by white doctors and nurses fills him with astonishment, and causes him to think why this should be done. It is a magnificent object lesson to the native of the practice in our lives of the Gospel of Christ.

One of the best gifts that can be given to any race of people is the gift of the Bible in their own tongue. But to prevent the Bible being a sealed book to them, the people must first be taught how to read. So the missionary must turn school-master and teach his people their letters. Here, then, is the beginning of educational work and it is found a great help to the evangelistic. For in school, reading is not the only subject taught. The children learn, as they never otherwise could, the story of Jesus. And the teacher is naturally the evangelist. So preaching and teaching in Africa go hand in hand.

Then there is work such as the African is not accustomed to. He is by no means lazy, as is so often said by ill-informed people; but he has to be taught

that work is not for inferiors only. Hence all kinds of useful trades are taught in large missions. The Africans make very good carpenters, gardeners, bricklayers, and printers. In fact, they pick up readily such trades as are taught them. Of course, at their present stage of development, they cannot be compared with white workman, and should never so be compared, but they do exceedingly well so far as they are able.

In thus educating and training their people the missions are endeavouring to make their converts Christians, who can read their Bibles, and who will prove themselves to be useful and industrious members of the community in which they live.

## CHAPTER XVII

### METHODS OF MISSION WORK

IN this chapter, which must be the last, I want to let you see as well as possible a little mission work in the various departments you read about in the preceding chapter. Let me begin with the evangelistic. In a missionary magazine I have come across a description which will suit the purpose very well. Here it is, a visit to a village preaching.

“Our machila carriers are impatient to be off. They are not always so anxious about an early start, but to-day we can sympathise with their impatience, for the hot weather is upon us, and travelling during the heat of the day is anything but comfortable. A start is made at last, and we are now as eager as

our 'boys' to see the end of the seven or eight-mile journey. It will take us almost two hours to do this short distance—two hours of as unpleasant travelling as one could wish to be saved from, for machila travelling is at the best but a mild form of being tossed in a blanket.

"The carriers keep up an incessant chatter all the way, varied at times with a break into the chorus of one of their machila songs.

'Gurr-r-r, Mwana wa mkango, Ine  
Child of a lion, I am fierce  
Fierce am I, child of a lion.  
Gurr-r-r, Gurr-r-r.'

Such is the complaint of one of the carriers as he sweats at the machila pole. He imitates, with wonderful skill, the deep growl of the lion, and fondly compares himself for strength to the king of beasts. The other boys with lusty chorus give him every support in his contention, and even we agree, judging from his deep growls, that he must really be what he says he is, and soon the chorus ends.

"But here we are at Chentambo's village. Our machila men promptly retire under the shade of the nearest tree and stretch themselves out to rest.

"The service has already begun, and, if we want to be in time next Sunday, we must leave very early. Che Bernard is giving an address, the gist of which is the contrast between the old heathen life of superstition and darkness and the new way of the cross, of truth and light and life eternal, of the love of God for fallen mankind, and the great sacrifice of Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

"It is skilfully placed before the audience, much

better than could be done by a white man. The people are interested; they understand, and they know that Bernard's way is the right one. You can read it on their faces. Old customs and superstitions, however, die hard, and to-morrow, perhaps, even to-day many of those eager listeners will be the same careless indifferent lot they were yesterday. But the seed is not falling only in stony places; customs and superstitions cannot always choke it. By and by will come the harvest and the triumph of the Word.

"While Bernard is speaking let us look around. That we are in the school is evident, for there is the blackboard and there the easel. Over on the other side hangs a syllable card. But on Sunday, it is the 'Nyumba ya Mulungu' (House of God), and here we are surrounded by such a crowd as never enters school.

"Men, women, and children of all ages are sitting upon the poles which do duty for seats. But when we run our eyes over the crowd we find that the majority are women and children. Of grown men there are few. Where may they be? They may, perhaps, be out of the district, on plantations, at the railway, or down to the river for loads, but they may also be somewhere not so far away, beer-drinking. There is, however, quite a goodly number of youths among our hearers.

"The audience is happy, noisily so. There is no such quiet here as is given to a home preacher. The little fat, brown, shining babies will not be still; they insist upon making themselves heard all through the address, and it is only when one has become most outrageous in his conduct, that his mother

thinks it necessary to let him see the trees outside.

“But when the white man gets up to begin to speak, all these tiny brown mortals seem by instinct to plot against him. No doubt his white face is the cause of it, for he is always greeted as only black babies can welcome a white speaker. Bernard however goes calmly on. He is used to this kind of thing and he does not suffer from nerves. So, too with his audience, not a word is lost.

“Crash! down goes a seat broken in two by the weight of some half-dozen ponderous dames. But this is quietly ignored by the rest of the audience, and the heavy ones proceed to accommodate themselves to a seat on the floor, as if nothing out of the way had happened. Then two dogs have disagreed and become unpleasant to one another, till a few vigorous cuffs and a blow from a stick convince our canine friends that to-day they must be on their best behaviour, fit and proper for dogs admitted to such an assembly. But the babies have their own way and perform an involuntary accompaniment all the time of the service.

“Bernard has finished now. He has urged the people to come to a decision to-day, not to put off till the to-morrow which never comes. Now is the time to take a stand on the side of truth and righteousness. Who will take his stand now? And so he leaves his audience to answer his final appeal.

“A hymn, one of the few which the school children have learned, has been given out by Bernard. He reads the first verse :—

‘ Mwamva mau a Mulungu  
 Mukabvomeranji ko?  
 Kodi musandula mtima  
 Ndi kumvera Yesu’yo.  
 Bvomerani, Bvomerani, Bvomerani msanga tu.’

You have heard the call of Jesus  
 And your answer now must give.  
 Turn to Him your heart so precious,  
 And obeying learn to live.  
 Oh believe Him : Oh believe Him : Oh believe Him :  
 quickly do.’

“ The singing is robust ; there is no absence of sound, and the hymn is enjoyed by all. It may not be the finest of music, but it is living, real, earnest.

“ Then follows a short prayer and the service is over. In a few minutes men, women, babies, and dogs are out into the sunshine, and we are enjoying, nay, gulping down the fresh air.

“ The hearers’ class has now assembled, and we endeavour to teach a few of the great truths of our faith to this little company of young men and women, To this little class we look for the things of the future. Here at least the ground is not stony. The seed is being sown in good soil and by God’s blessing will bear fruit in the future and become the foundation on which to build another church.

“ When the lesson is over we have a few minutes talk with Bernard and some of the boys, to give and to receive words of encouragement in the work. Then once more to our machila and back home, our ‘ Mwana wa mkango ’ being as fierce as ever.

‘ Guwr-r-r. Mwana wa mkango, Ine.  
 Guwr-r-r ; Mwana wa mkango, Ine.  
 Guwr-r-r ; Guwr-r-r.’”





A MISSION SCHOOL CLASS



Now let me send you along with a mission lady to visit a village school, so that you may know a little about the educational work of an African mission. But I am afraid you cannot go to the village so I must let the lady tell of her visit herself. This is what she writes, and had you gone with her you would have seen it all with your own eyes :

“ ‘ Our Donna is coming ! Our Donna is coming ! ’ Thus heralded, we approach the village, a flock of small boys, who have come to meet us, dancing along before the machila, shrieking at the pitch of their shrill young voices.

“ ‘ Our Donna has come ! ’ announces that we have reached the village courtyard. There stands the school, a little grass shed, with forms like bird perches ; and the teacher, conspicuous by his clean white clothes, and Kungauma, the headman, are waiting there to welcome me.

“ After a little, a wheezy horn is blown by a stalwart young man, and the scholars begin to assemble. Meantime I pay a visit to the women’s quarters where the older women are busy pounding the maize and sifting the flour. After a few words of friendly greeting, enquires about their work and notice of their babies—for a black mother, as well as a white one, likes to see ‘ her bairns respeckit like the lave ’—I return to the school. It is full to overflowing.

“ A hymn is sung and prayers are said by the teacher ; then the classes arrange themselves on their respective ‘ perches.’ I begin to examine Class 1, while an admiring circle of fond mothers and sympathising friends squats outside. After going conscientiously through the lessons of Class 1, we go on to Class 2, and I hear them their allotted task.

"But time is flying! I ask what other classes still remain to be examined. "Class 3 and an Infant," replies the teacher, indicating their whereabouts. I glance at the dozen or so of eager little faces that compose Class 3 and then look towards the "Infant." He may be such, legally so-called, but to my astonishment I see the stalwart young man who performed upon the bronchitic horn! It turns out later that he is the most advanced pupil in the school and is reading an English book, called the "Infant Reader"; hence his name.

"Leaving him and Class 3 for another day, I call the young women and girls to begin sewing. Forty are in my class, and more would like to enter, but I cannot give proper attention to a larger number. One is advanced to enough sew a child's frock, several are hemming sashes, most of them are at the elementary 'patch' stage. As I give out the seams I glance at their hands. Some, conscious of cleanliness and virtue, will voluntarily turn up their little pink palms for my inspection. 'Mine are clean, Adonna, look at mine!' while others have to be sent to wash.

"Soon the class is hard at work. Some learn very quickly, others find the management of the needle almost beyond their powers; some need words of praise and encouragement to help them to persevere, while others require judicious fault-finding and criticism to nip incipient vanity in the bud. A few words about the use of the words 'Please' and 'Thank you,' a few lessons in the elements of gentle bearing to each other—courtesy to my self is never lacking—are taken in very good part, and remembered and put into practice.

“In the course of the day’s lesson, which lasts two and a half to three hours, several may get advanced from the ‘patch’ to the ‘sash’ stage. The price of the ordinary sash is sixpence. (The work done in all the sewing classes is sold later at a little bazaar, and the proceeds are given to some scheme in connection with the native church.) I hear the girls planning how they will manage to buy the sash when it is hemmed. ‘I have fowls at home worth sixpence,’ says one. ‘I have only one fowl but it can lay eggs,’ says another. Some, having no source of income can but regretfully admire, and envy their more fortunate companion.

“About two o’clock I take in the work again, and proceed to do a little simple surgery, the binding up of ulcers chiefly. Anything serious I decline to dress, advising the sufferers to come to Hospital, but the simple sores, which are sadly common, are quite within my powers. It brings me into touch with the people at another point of contact and increases our sympathy.

“The dressings done and the farewells said, I call my carriers, get into my machila, and off we go, my men singing lustily as they bear me swiftly along the native path. The village lies close among the hills, and the path winds in and out through native gardens and bush and long grass, while two streams and a bog have to be forded. On either side rise the ‘everlasting hills’; solemn, grand, restful, beautiful at all times, in sunshine or shadow. In about an hour we leave the native path and turn into the dusty high road, and a very short time finds us again at the mission.”

And now to show you mission hospital work. I

have found in the same magazine the story of Gwebede, the Angoni labourer.

“ His home was in far Angoniland—the village where his childhood had passed, where he played through many a sunny day, rolling in the sand till he was white, fighting mock battles with big grasses for spears, ‘ tying ’ little houses of grass and sticks, and lurking in them—all play and no school ; and at night time sleeping in his mother’s hut, close to the fire, beside the dogs and the chickens. Now he is a little boy, perhaps ten years old, and when his brothers and uncles and companions are getting ready to go off to work with the white men, Gwebede joins the party. He will work for three months and then come proudly home with his earnings. His earnings will be an altogether unimaginable extent of beautiful white calico. Perhaps it will be enough to pay his mother’s hut tax, and when that is paid they will tuck the yellow-edged paper with the stamp on it safely away among the shiny black grass on the inside of the roof.

“ So he trots gaily along the narrow path, carrying on a stick over his shoulder some yellow cobs of maize for food by the way. At night he is very tired, and after roasting his corn and grinding it up with his little white grinders he very soon drops asleep. The party travel for a day or two, and then stop to work for a day at some village to earn food for the further journey. In about a week they reach their destination and see the coffee planters’ broad acres of cleared ground where in rows grow the coffee plants, as big as gooseberry bushes, some of them a little bigger. Then is Gwebede installed with hoe in hand amongst the coffee.





ATTACKED BY A LEOPARD



“Now one morning early Gwebede got up and had just stepped out of the grass shelter where he slept, when a great leopard sprang on him, caught him by the back of the neck in its mouth, and bounded off with him as easily as a cat would do with a mouse. Gwebede’s brothers are waked from their sleep, and look out. ‘A leopard!’ they shout as they seize hold of the red brands of their evening fire and rush out yelling as they run. Into the grass they dash: yonder is the leopard: after him! He is frightened: he drops the boy: he is off!

“Then they carefully pick up Gwebede. Poor little Gwebede! Is he dead? No, but there is a great wound as if the leopard had taken a mouthful away from the back of his head. They take him to their master, who promptly binds up the wound, and sends them off with a letter to the hospital. It is a long distance, and it is late in the afternoon when they reach the mission.

“This was the first we saw of Gwebede. There did not seem to be much hope for him. A little thin boy with a face full of terror, whom the slightest movement made to cry out with pain. He refused to swallow medicine, so we injected under his skin a little dose of that blessed drug that takes away pain, and in a few minutes he was asleep. Then we washed and dressed his wound. A leopard’s teeth are such dirty things that the wound they make is very difficult to get clean. One has to wash and wash and wash for a long time, going carefully into all the holes and corners.

“As the days passed the pain became less, and the wound began to heal. For several days Gwebede cried a good deal, and we had to repeat the dose under

his skin to put him to sleep. Then we noticed that he was beginning to enjoy his food, and one day the attendant told us that 'Gwebede had laughed.' These were good signs.

"A few weeks later if you could have seen Gwebede you would have seen that he was no longer thin, but getting quite respectably stout, and also that he was constantly smiling. The night attendant noticed, however, that he sometimes started and cried out in his sleep. This is the way with people that have been hurt by wild beasts. For long afterwards they dream dreadful dreams. Indeed, some of them are afraid to sleep alone. They can't help thinking that a beast will come into the room.

"One day Gwebede's brothers came to take him home. They said that the whole party from their village were about to start for home. We begged them to leave Gwebede with us to be attended to, and we asked them to come back for him in a month. They said they were afraid to go back without him, because Gwebede's mother would say, 'What have you done with Gwebede?' We told them that Gwebede was not well enough to do without having his wound dressed. They saw also that he was quite happy in the ward. So they decided to go back to their master and do another month's work, and at the end of the month to come again for Gwebede.

"The month passed, Gwebede walked about slowly and sedately, holding his head in the air because his neck was stiff. He got fatter and fatter, till his face grew like a little round moon—a black moon—full of smiles and dimples. He was the jolliest little boy you could imagine. Then came again the big brothers. Gwebede's neck was now quite healed.

The great open wound had closed up and now there was only a scar left. Soon he was dancing and skipping along the road with his brothers, having clean forgotten the stiffness of his neck, and that was the last we saw of little Gwebede."

Now that you have heard such a great deal about Africa and its children, and about mission work, are you not glad, my dear young friends, that you are enjoying the privilege of helping to make Christ known among the black people, that you are helping them to learn to read and write, that you are helping them to be taught useful trades, and that you are helping to bind up their wounds and ease their pain? I know that you are. We all want Africa to belong to Christ and in God's own time it will be so. Meantime we must not faint or be weary although the fight against the powers of darkness be fierce and long. Africa, the dark continent must, emerge from darkness at the call of her Lord and Master and take her place among the nations who live in the Light of the Saviour of the world.

" Spirit of truth and love,  
Life-giving, holy Dove,  
Speed forth thy flight :  
Move o'er the water's face  
Bearing the lamb of grace,  
And in earth's darkest place  
Let there be light."









## DATE DUE

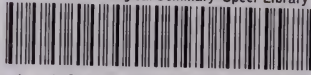
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